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The Editors
GUNSHOTS, AGAIN

ONE DOLLAR

APRIL 10, 1981

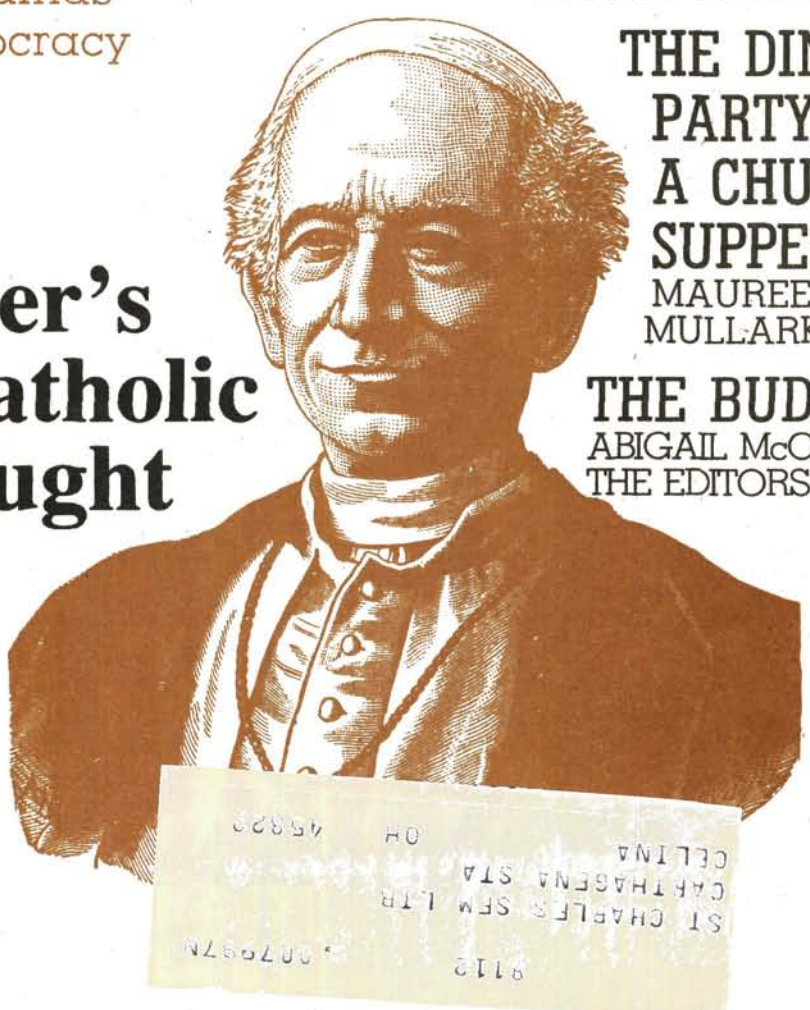
THE ATTACK ON FOOD STAMPS
NANCY AMIDEI

EL SALVADOR & THE CHURCH
J. BRYAN HEHIR

POLISH SURPRISE
RONALD MODRAS

From Thomas Aquinas to economic democracy

SAMUEL HUX
An outsider's look at Catholic social thought



THE DINNER PARTY IS A CHURCH SUPPER
MAUREEN MULLARKEY

THE BUDGET
ABIGAIL McCARTHY
THE EDITORS

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Correspondence

Malarkey & McSorley

Toronto, Canada

To the Editors: Without wishing to appear ungrateful to James Burtchaell [Contemporary Theology Issue, Jan. 30] for acknowledging the role I played in helping him reach one of his "most persisting theological" insights, I do wish to defend Karl Rahner's reputation for theological good sense by pointing out to readers not yet familiar with Rahner's thought that that great theologian, contrary to Burtchaell's suggestion, does *not* hold that "basically, a person cleaves to God by doing something religious."

If Father Burtchaell thinks "anything according to Rahner is pretty murky" and if he tends "to forget [Rahner's] beginning by the time" he arrives, "spent, at his conclusion," he might try reading some of Rahner's numerous, more popular essays or one of his "short forms of the creed."

While rightly rejecting his misunderstanding of Rahner as "malarkey," I fear that Burtchaell's own brief version of the what and the how of the good news of salvation in the third paragraph of his contribution might have earned from the author of the *Letter to the Galatians* an even stronger term of denunciation. I am pleased to add, however, that the paragraph in question *can* be given a thoroughly Rahnerian — and Christian — interpretation.

For the record, the main presentation I was to give at the Notre Dame Episcopal Seminar in 1968 originally bore the general title: "Theological Aspects of Structures in the Church." Informal conversation with a number of bishops during the first two days of the conference led me to shift the focus of my paper to a problem that had become increasingly urgent for them: the authority of magisterial pronouncements on moral issues, with special reference to the teaching on birth control. That address, dealing with the fallibility of such teaching and with the possibility of legitimate dissent from it, was given on July 11 — not early autumn, as Burtchaell has it — less than three weeks prior to *Humanae Vitae*! The night the encyclical was published, a prominent archbishop, one of whose auxiliaries had been present at the seminar, sent a representative to Washington, D.C. to receive from me some documentation on the norms of legitimate dissent that I had outlined at Notre Dame.

Some bishops may think they have, as Burtchaell puts it, "a plenitude of faith-understanding." This would, I agree, make implausible their attendance at the annual theology seminar. But I can give Jim personal assurance that others beside himself went away from the Notre Dame seminar with some theological insight.

HARRY McSORLEY
Department of Religious Studies
University of Toronto

A last hurrah

Unionville, Ct.

To the Editors: I deplore *Commonweal's* use of cartoons, and I especially disliked your cartoon showing Mr. Carter about to shut himself in a suitcase. Also, I do not agree with J. Patrick Dobel's opening sentence in "A Last Lament for James Earl Carter," [Feb. 13].

Mr. Carter, I am certain, does *not* want to forget that he was ever president. He is proud of his four years in office and justly so.

Mr. Dobel's article enumerates many accomplishments which should make Mr. Carter proud. Unfortunately, the favorable remarks were in the last half . . . Many hard decisions were courageously made without adequate support. I disagree, however, that they were badly articulated or that Mr. Carter was haltingly incoherent.

Perhaps, if "beauty is in the eye of the beholder" as they say, then, eloquence may be in the ear of the listener. Many people who listened with good-will and who respected Mr. Carter would agree with me that he spoke with unusual clarity and intelligence. He was not an orator, but he was never at a loss for the right word, his grammer and syntax were always correct. Was his cadence "halting" or was it *measured* in order that he might say precisely what he wished to say? I believe there are many who would say that the latter was the case.

ANN KELLY BLANCHARD

A press responsibility?

Greensboro, N.C.

To the Editors: After reading J. Patrick Dobel's exellent article "A Last Lament for James Earl Carter" [Feb. 13], one question haunts me — why could not the press in this country have printed articles like this about Carter's very real accomplishments *before* it was too late? I make no claim to being any kind of an authority about politics or history; I have a mere Master's Degree in the field of history. But even I could see clearly the man's capabilities, his intelligent grasp of realities, and his courageous efforts to convince people of the imperative need to conserve energy and preserve our environment if we are to survive, to say nothing of his achievements in human rights and his handling of the Iranian crisis. Was it indeed so difficult to see this? . . .

One of the truest and most perceptive assessments of Carter is Dobel's statement, "Carter bore witness to the fact that a religious man can participate in politics guided by a religiously informed conscience but not bound by exclusivist authority — a point misunderstood by most liberals . . ." Sadly, it was also misunderstood by *Commonweal*. It certainly should *not* have been. I did not renew my subscription to your periodical several years ago, as I mentioned then,

(Conintued on page 222)

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THOUGHTS, THE MORNING AFTER

IT WAS LESS than twenty-four hours before *Commonweal* would go to press. The editorial on gun control was already in type. The editorial questioning the philosophy of the administration's budget was being completed. Suddenly news came that once again the fabric of political life had been rent by violence. The president, we were first assured, was safe, but other victims of the assassination attempt lay close to death.

Most Americans over thirty still remember exactly where they were and what they were doing on that grim day in November of 1963. The first reaction, then, was of utter, numbing disbelief. If March 30 was different, it was not only because the news from the first about the president's condition was reassuring. *Then* we simply didn't believe it could happen. *Now*, after the Memphis balcony and the Los Angeles hotel kitchen and so many other incidents of similar violence at home and abroad (Aldo Moro, Lord Mountbatten, Allard Lowenstein, John Lennon, Archbishop Romero), we know all to well and all too sadly that it can happen. In 1963, too, we demanded an explanation, a meaning for the event. Editorialists and public commentators held forth on the spirit of Dallas, the authoritarian personality of the right and (when more was learned of the gunman) of the left, the pervasiveness of violence in America. We wanted to learn something about ourselves, so that such an event could be prevented in the future. Since then we have grown less confident that any generalizations can be made from the deeds of individuals like Lee Harvey Oswald, Sirhan Sirhan, Arthur Bremer. Each has seemed afflicted with a special and private madness; and we worry that the very senselessness of their acts can become a kind of blank page on which to write some larger case that, in truth, should stand or fall on its own merits and quite apart from the murderous incidents at hand.

Nonetheless, a moment like this is almost a ritual one calling for wider reflections. It is a moment when we think again of our constitutional safeguards and renew our dedication to orderly debate and democratic government. It is a moment when we think about the meaning of an open society—heads of police states are seldom shot. It is a moment when we pray for those who risk and sacrifice their lives in public service. It is a moment when we recognize the precarious state of global survival that rests so heavily in the hands of a few leaders of nuclear powers. It is a moment when we reflect on the value of human life and the depth of family sorrow, and extend our thoughts from Washington to Atlanta, from the president and Mr. Brady to the thousands of victims of assassinations and their families throughout the world.

We have criticized Ronald Reagan's policies, and because the lives of so many othes depend on those policies, we do not think that criticism should be muted now. But the president has surely shown himself a man of indomitable spirit. We rejoice in the prospect of his swift recovery. And the nation's.

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ROBIN HOOD IN REVERSE

By now the basic fact behind the Reagan budget has been widely recognized: it takes from the poor and gives to the rich. Perhaps there are justifications for such a step. Justifications, in fact, do lie buried in the economic and psychological theories that guide the Reagan administration; and a few indiscreet souls like David A. Stockman have dared to express them openly. But the fact itself should not be obscured by the other, more official, rhetoric about "even-handedness," or "across-the-board" sacrifices, or preserving the "social safety net" for the "truly needy." The three largest of the seven "safety net" programs that the president exempted from cuts — Social Security, medicare, and veterans' benefits — are important measures but they do not primarily assist the "truly needy"; and their reprieve from budget surgery is due less to social welfare calculations than political ones. Of the 25 million Americans below the poverty line, 15 million receive either nothing at all from the exempted safety-net programs or at most a free school lunch for the children. One out of every five families on welfare would be rendered ineligible or have their benefits reduced under the Reagan proposals. And one step up on the income ladder are the low-income workers and the lower middle-class and middle-class citizens who will be most affected by a variety of cuts in CETA jobs, mass transit, health and education, and support for economically needy cities and regions. Three-quarters of the tax cuts proposed for next year will go to the upper quarter of the taxpayers. Noting the administration's argument that "all elements of society, including business, will share the pain of the spending reductions," *Business Week* has reassured its readers that, in fact, "the impact on business will generally be light and, in some cases, will be offset by the planned buildup in U.S. military capacity."

The idea of a government so unabashedly playing Robin Hood in reverse is not one with which Americans are comfortable. So we have various way of consoling ourselves. We can believe that most of these government expenditures were "fat." (A Gallup poll shows that Americans think half their federal tax dollars are wasted.) But as the cuts come closer to home, or as they are studied in detail, it is hard to sustain the notion that nothing but "fat" is at stake. Waste there is, of course, and it should be eliminated where possible. But you cannot always cut out a pound of "fat" without spilling a good deal of blood at the same time.

There is another way of consoling ourselves. It is the belief that the "poor" are not really so poor, that the individuals, the regions, the neighborhoods being deprived of revenues and services will only be marginally affected. Somehow they will make do. Indeed they may be better for it, prodded to stand on their own, jarred into self-reliance and greater effort. This consolation, too, contains some truth, but not enough to take us very far. It is true that many of the targets of the budget cuts will only be marginally affected. Often enough, however, that may be the crucial margin that sustains the spirit if not even the body. It is also true that necessity is the mother of invention — sometimes. It can also be the mother of despair. Some people will "make do" — by slipping into alcoholism, by taking out their rage on neighbors and passers-by and then filling our prisons, by neglecting or abusing children and passing social costs on to another generation. Far more will "make do" by simply suffering quietly.

The administration does not like the term "redistribution"; it has egalitarian connotations. But the proposed budget is an exercise in redistribution, from the less well-off to the wealthy. There are two ways of looking at this. One is that the middle- and low-income groups are being asked to sacrifice disproportionately for the military buildup that, it is claimed, America requires. The perversity of this demand is obvious, which explains why almost no one is admitting that this is exactly what is occurring. The second way of looking at the Reagan redistribution is that poorer Americans are being asked to finance the future economic growth of the country. Their losses today will redound to the benefit of all tomorrow. This makes more sense, but it is still not convincing. For many of today's losers the gains of tomorrow will never come. Those gains will be realized, if they are realized at all, in different parts of the country, in different industries, and perhaps in a different generation. Nor will it be the sons and daughters of today's losers who, pushed further into disadvantage, are most likely to be the beneficiaries of that brighter future.

The administration presents that brighter economic future as the end that justifies these particular means. To the objection that a brighter future for all ought to be paid for by all, and in proportion to their current and probably future stake in society, the administration answers that only the wealthy can invest and manage society's resources efficiently. The wealthy must have a greater share, therefore, in these resources and be freed of restrictions on their use.

There are sound economic reasons for not sharing the administration's faith in this matter. But there are also sound political reasons for wondering whether, in practice, that brighter future is what this budget is really about. Redistribution, Reagan-style, is questionable enough as a means. It is worse yet if one concludes that it is simply the end.

BRAZIL VS. CHURCH

Brazil's old "Alien Law" was no piece of cake. The new one, passed last summer, has a lot of people worried. Its impact on political exiles from other countries—of whom there are, by unofficial estimates, one hundred to three hundred thousand—does not, by right-wing standards, represent a novelty. Its potential impact on Brazil's progressive church, increasingly the sole defender of peasants and Indians dispossessed and displaced by industrial and agribusiness development in the interior, does indicate something new—and possibly crippling.

President Joao Baptista Figueriredo has been trumpeting a "democratic opening." The new law belies it. It rescinds Brazil's agreement to the Caracas and Montevideo accords on

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the right to political asylum. In effect, the Brazilian state security police are now authorized to act as the long arm of neighboring oppressive regimes who target dissident exiles for repatriation—arrest, denial of legal hearing, and expulsion, all within twenty-four hours. Nor will marriage to a Brazilian, unless of three years duration, any longer prevent deportation.

The effect on the church may be grievous. Nearly forty percent of the Catholic clergy is foreign-born. The law envisions resident visas only for those whose skills contribute to increased industrial production—a criterion few missionaries are likely to meet. But even for those with permanent visas, the government may now confine externs to live in a certain area and be employed as the government sees fit.

Church authorities are alarmed. If the new rules are strictly adhered to, the government now has a mechanism to stop the flow of missionaries to the country. Even if not used in this way, there's the threat the new law will be—if compliance and complicity are not forthcoming. The "confinement" clause (article 18) has one obvious intent: to keep missionaries out of the hinterland, away from the earth's wretched. With this, the government bids to assume control over the church's pastoral ministry. The presidency is apparently not enough. Mr. Figueriredo obviously wants to be bishop, indeed the episcopal primate.

MORE ON GUN CONTROL

In our March 13 issue, an article by Don B.Kates made a case against mandatory gun control, arguing that that approach simply would not work. Mr. Kates raised some very good points, which is why we printed his piece. But there are still a lot of arguments on the other side of the question. One of the strongest of these cases for gun control rests on the experience of other major Western industrialized nations — experience examined in a report months ago in the *Washington Post*.

Most of the nations studied require anyone who wants to buy a gun to obtain a license first, usually through the local police. Conditions for granting such licenses vary, but they generally require a rigorous check on the applicant's background, possible police record and occasionally his or her mental health record as well. Thus getting a license is not simply a pro forma operation in the first place, and once gotten such a license must be regularly renewed. In some countries applicants must also pass a grueling exam to prove experience and competence in handling a weapon. In Japan, private ownership of handguns is simply forbidden.

Nor is all the burden on the would-be purchaser. Manufacturers are subject to strict governmental regulation so guns produced by them can be controlled and more easily traced. Gun dealers are also subject to control, with hefty fines for selling to anyone without a valid license.

How successful are these laws? Gun control is certainly not the only factor in a high or low crime rate; some commentators argue that a tradition of violence stains all American history, and there is undoubtedly some truth in this. Yet the easy availability of handguns must have some bearing on violent crimes, especially unpremeditated crimes of sudden passion. Under Mrs. Thatcher, Great Britain has a zooming unemployment rate and in some in areas racial tensions run high; nonetheless, the murder rate in Britain is one-tenth that of the United States. Out of the 220 million people in the U.S. there were last year 340,000 cases of violent crimes (murder, robbery, aggravated assault) involving the use of a firearm. In West Germany, with 70 million inhabitants, there were less than 300. In Japan, with 115 million citizens, there were 171.

As we said, no one argues that guns alone are the only factor in such crime statistics, but their presence or absence in quantity must have some significance. Given this country's soaring rate of violent crime involving handguns, it is hard to see why gun control should not be given a serious try. The effect would not be immediate; it would take some years before the present huge supply of handguns could be brought under some kind of control, and federal regulation would be required rather than the present system with thousands of different and often conflicting local statutes. Even then it is true that we may never be able to match Great Britain's murder rate of one-tenth of ours, but surely any substantial reduction in violent crime would be worth the effort.

Of several minds: *Abigail McCarthy*

THE RAGE TO LIVE

CAN WE AFFORD THE REAGAN BUDGET CUTS?

THE POOR will not suffer — that is what they keep saying as they cut welfare and assistance programs. But how do they measure suffering? Or what people can endure? Who remembers poorhouses? Every county used to have one. In our county it was a large red brick farmhouse back from the graveled road between the county seat and the next town. From a distance it looked pleasant enough. Driving by you could see men and women sitting on the porch looking at the road — sometimes a few working in the garden or coming from the hen houses. Most of the people there were too old and sick to work.

It was only on our once or twice a year visits with the Girl Scouts to sing Christmas carols or present a 4th of July program that we saw the dreary interior. I remember the bare unpainted floorboards scantily covered here and there with cracked, worn linoleum rugs, the long common tables covered with oil cloth and reset after every meal with thick crockery. The walls I remember as painted a depressing peculiar shade of green but I may be imagining that. Perhaps over the years in my imagination that sickly color has become a symbol of

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the final hopelessness and defeat I saw there but did not recognize. But I do not imagine the smell — of lye and cooked cabbage and that of the old, uncared for.

They would have been seated in uncertain rows on hard kitchen chairs, urged into their places by the brisk, not unkind custodian, and we would sing and recite, insolent in our youth and sure of our good intentions. Then they would go back to their endless sitting. Every quarter or so the county paper would publish their names and what it cost to feed and clothe them. Crop failures, small scrimped-out savings finally used up, getting too sick or too old for the mill or the button factory, these things sent them there — no matter how hard you worked, bad luck could send you to the poorhouse. The average adult in our town lived all his or her life in fear of it.

In the days before school lunch programs school children who lived too far from school to go home at lunch time ate at their desks in study hall or sitting on the bleacher benches in the school gymnasium. Those of us who taught then can remember how some children huddled over their lunch bags, and ate furtively so that the more affluent could not see the single piece of black bread smeared with lard or the slab of cold, cooked cereal. Some brought no lunches at all and pretended that they wanted to spend lunch hour shooting baskets, or studying. They would try very hard not to watch "the rich kids" eating.

Social security, welfare, school lunch programs — they have been imperfect, but, even at the worst, they have been better than what preceded them. At best they have guarded human dignity, and been an assurance that every person has value in the eyes of the nation.

Why is the administration so set on cutting the programs for the poor? Unhappily we must conclude that its proposals are a justification of years of exaggerated rhetoric on the part of Reagan as the voice of the conservatives — the "welfare queen" rhetoric which so many of us failed to take seriously but which served him so well. Governor Edmund G. Brown, Jr., has pointed out that a trademark of the present president's governing technique is to try to shift burdens to lower units of government. In the case of the poor, sick, elderly, and children, the shift would now have to be to the states.

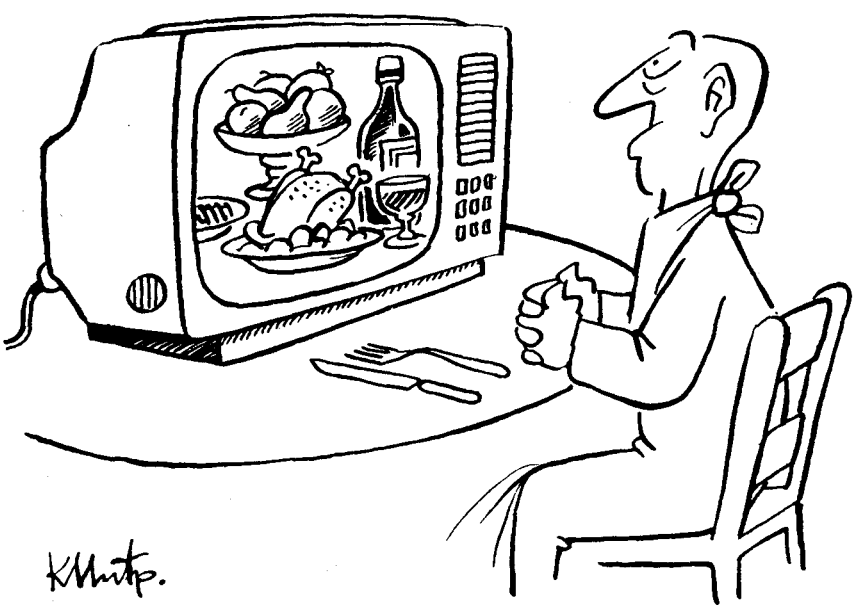
Few states can pick up the slack. Unfortunately, any close look indicates that their people might not want to. The American people are neither as generous nor as compassionate as we would like to think — therein lies the reason for the popularity of the president's welfare rhetoric.

The state of Florida is a case in point. Its government lures the wealthy retired with one of the most generous tax programs in the country. It is not so kind to the poor. According to a recent study made by the Florida Catholic Conference, the state spends only seven percent of its tax dollar on welfare programs. A family of four with no outside income would receive $230 (aid to families with dependent children) and $209 in food stamps. On an annual basis that is $2200 *below* the poverty level. Today there are more than one million people in Florida living at or below the poverty level, sixty percent of whom receive no cash welfare payments. One can only conjecture what the cut in food stamps alone will mean to them, but many of them do not receive even that help now. Can one doubt that the numbers of the hungry and the hopeless will increase there and in other states?

The question the administration should be asking is whether the country, foundering in economic stagnation, facing multiplying international crises, challenged by the Third World, can afford a growing number of the hungry and the hopeless. On the face of it these are the helpless people: children under working age, women heads of household, the elderly, and the disabled. But they are not all helpless, even these. Thoughtful police administrators are beginning to warn that the great increase in crime comes not just from faulty, inadequate deterrents, but also from the fact that great shifting blocks of our population, from the gangs of the South Bronx to the rural poor, have no place in our changing industrial society.

The poor of the great Depression, the poor of the poorhouses and empty lunch boxes tended to feel that their plight stemmed from some deficiency in themselves. (People who worked to put in effect the first social programs of the Roosevelt era tell of the touching, grateful letters they received.) More than a generation has passed. The people of today are different. They do not accept easily the idea that they should be the waste of a society unable to incorporate them. It may well be that the poor *will* not suffer; the rage to live and to live fully grows stronger every day all over the world.

ABIGAIL McCARTHY



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The bishops speak on El Salvador

J. Bryan Hehir

The following column is an abbreviated version of the testimony that Father Hehir gave, as associate secretary for international justice and peace of the U.S. Catholic Conference, before the House Foreign Operations subcommittee. The testimony was given at the end of February.

THE BISHOPS IN the United States take their perspective on the conflict in El Salvador from the viewpoint of the church there. We accept the testimony of the church in El Salvador because the Christian community there has proven its fidelity to the vision of the Gospel by the witness of its life. The distinguishing characteristic of the El Salvadoran church is a pastoral ministry based on "the option for the poor." This was the theme enunciated by all the bishops of Latin America in their meeting with Pope John Paul II at Puebla, Mexico in 1979. The church of El Salvador has fulfilled this ministry by an explicit choice to accompany the people, especially the poor and the oppressed, in their daily struggle and suffering. In the midst of a civil war the church of El Salvador has accepted the prophetic vocation of the scriptures and it has paid the prophet's price in the lives of Archbishop Oscar Romero, eleven priests martyred in four years, and countless *campesinos* deprived of livelihood and life itself because of fidelity to the Gospel vision of justice. The same sacrifice of life itself was made by the four U.S. missionaries who were murdered in December.

The church of El Salvador has taught us to see the civil war through the eyes of the people it serves. For the church in the United States this has been a valuable lesson — we do not find that perspective of the conflict reflected often in press reports, even less so in the public debate. We have been led by the Salvadoran church, and by American missionaries working there, to see the struggle of the last three years as a quest for social justice by the majority of the population, who have too long been denied the fruit of their labor; to see the conflict as one rooted in historical patterns of inequity — in the concentration of political, economic and social power in the hands of very few, while the majority lived in conditions marked by poverty and violence.

It is the life of the majority — their struggles, their suffering, their hope for themselves and their children, their faith and long-suffering patience — which I wish to put before this subcommittee. The questions of the church are: How are *they* affected by the present conflict? What does a massive increase in U.S. military aid say to them and what will it do to them? These are not the only questions before the Congress, but these are the ones which the United States Catholic Conference will stress because they are in danger of being lost in the altered definition of the situation which now dominates the public debate in the United States.

It is the recent *redefinition* of the El Salvador conflict which the USCC finds deeply troubling. . . . The redefinition, as we understand it, involves two steps.

First, it describes the conflict in El Salvador in terms of an international dimension emphasizing a test of superpower will and capability. In the idiom of the moment, El Salvador has been transformed into an "East-West" conflict as well as a question of "North-South" relations for U.S. policy. This internationalization of the conflict concentrates attention, at the level of policy and public opinion, not on the fate and future of the people of El Salvador, but on the role of the Soviet Union in the Caribbean and our response to it. Second, not only has El Salvador become a test of U.S.-Soviet relations in the hemisphere, it seems to have assumed the role of a model of how the U.S. will resist Soviet adventurism in the developing world.

I offer two comments on this recasting of the El Salvador problem. First, the involvement of the Soviet Union (and other Eastern-bloc nations), on its own or through Cuban cooperation, in the internal struggles of Central America is unwarranted, unhelpful, and ultimately unacceptable on the part of a superpower. In rejecting superpower intervention, either by the Soviet Union or by the United States, in the El Salvadoran conflict, the USCC is once again simply reiterating the voice of the church in El Salvador. An example of this voice is the recent homily of Bishop Rivera y Damas which rejected military intervention by either superpower as detrimental to the self-determination of the El Salvadoran people. It is the position of this testimony, therefore, that Soviet or Cuban involvement in the conflict is inadmissible on political, legal, and moral grounds. The problem with present U.S. policy, in our view, is not the opposition to Soviet involvement, but (a) the priority given this issue, to the detriment of more fundamental questions, and (b) the problem of which means are appropriate to resist Soviet or Cuban activity.

Hence, my second comment is to argue, on the basis of both political and moral grounds, for giving priority to the internal problem of El Salvador. If we simply lift this whole conflict out of context and make it an East-West face-off, we lose sight of the essence of the problem. Outside agitation, influence, even weapons, would not be sown in such fertile soil if rampant injustice and fundamental inequities did not exist today as they have for decades in El Salvador. If we move toward em-

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An outsider's look at Catholic social thought

SAMUEL HUX

IN THE MIDST of the "what happened and whither now" assessments on the Left after the 1980 elections, I'd like to make a proposition which might seem odd, given the cheapening of the political process by some of the professedly religious during the campaign: what the U.S. needs is more, not less, direct religious involvement in politics.

Most of the liberal and radical discussion of religion and politics in the United States recently misses the point; reactions for instance to those fundamentalist movements such as Moral Majority: the caution that we should "remember the principle of separation of church and state." What we mean by that principle in public debate is, actually, hard to determine. All the Constitution has to say is, in Article VI, "no religious test shall ever be required as a qualification to any office or public trust under the United States," and, in the First Amendment, "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof." Since the "free exercise thereof" must certainly include voting according to one's religious principles or campaigning in accord with them, it's difficult to see how the church/state argument is relevant. It is merely awkward.

It is also difficult to see what, in most cases, the "political" positions of the fundamentalist revival have to do with Christianity itself. Of course the anti-abortion "right to life" movement *can* be supported by Christian argument, if arguments are not too subtle. But for the most part the "politics" of the born-again is nothing more than the inarticulate yearnings, articulated by mass-media pastors, of people who have a poor sense of economic and social, domestic and international realities, and an insufficient understanding of or even concern for what it means in this world to be one's brother's keeper.

I put *politics* within quotation marks above because *politics* has to retain its root meaning of having to do with the *polis* — and the *polis* is down here, in this world. Frankly, I don't think the revivalists, with their incoherent collection of single issues they're willing to support, often to the expulsion from Congress of representatives who support their economic well-being (moral majoritarians by and large are not the rich), know what that means. If one's religious faith can be applied to political choice not with a large scope which takes into account the interconnectedness of human necessities but only through endorsement or rejection of the single issue, then either one's faith or its application of it is inadequate, down here. Maybe not somewhere else, of course. A professor of mine, Leonard F. Dean, scholar and translator of Erasmus's *The Praise of Folly*, used to say that the trouble with utopias is that, there, only one thing happens at a time.

But the broad folly of the fundamentalist constituency of the New Right is squarely within the tradition of religious involvement in politics in this nation. Whatever the expansive mental habits of some Jesuit professor of political philosophy or the editorial staff of a journal of opinion such as *Christianity and Crisis* . . . or *Commonweal*, when there is in the U.S. some identifiably "Christian" collective direct action on the American political stage — as opposed to journalists reviewing the play and philosophers developing theories of political dramaturgy — the actors are generally moved by some single issue. Even when the issue is worthy, it's rarely the case that actors are moved by some vision of the interconnectedness of issues. Why is there not a truly *Christian* politics in this nation? There cannot be without a *Christian* political ideology. Why isn't there such an ideology?

Is the question naive? Perhaps. The assumption behind it — that it's the business of religion to concern itself with the polity as much as with the saving and comforting of souls — is, at any rate, potentially vulgar; because it is so often the assumption of the person who feels that religion should cease fooling around with theological subtleties and get down to where it's really at and get with it, the "Trendier than Thou" syndrome Paul Seabury analyzed a few years ago (*Harper's*, October 1978).

I'd like to dissociate myself from this trivializing tendency of the age. I am fond of quoting the great German Protestant

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theologian Friedrich Schleiermacher that religion is "a sense and taste for the infinite." But since my own motives may be just as offensive as the trendies', some forthright confession of my own credentials, or lack of them, is only fair; I may be the last person a Christian should listen to. The last time I looked I was a Protestant; but the last time I looked was well over twenty years ago. I slipped away from the church and, for reasons truly not relevant to this discussion, have never found my way back — while I have never been comfortable with a secular view of the world; something of that "sense and taste for the infinite" remains. Since my religious credentials are defined by their absence, there's probably something impertinent in suggesting that Christianity, and specifically Catholicism, could be useful to those who share a political faith with me. So forgive me, if you will.

It's often assumed that the easily documented disproportionate numbers of Jews in left-liberal and socialist movements in American history is best explained as the tendency of immigrants and outsiders to flock to the parties welcoming the dispossessed. But considering the generally continued attachment to liberal values several generations later in the midst of fair professional success and economic mobility, the phenomenon is explained just as convincingly as an almost reflexive response to the communal traditions of Jewish living down the centuries, in which one *is* one's brother's keeper, and to the rabbinic commands that you never turn the poor away without a meal.

But however strong the American Catholic attachment to the Democratic party has been (used to be?), or however unlikely the New and Fair Deal reforms without the "Catholic vote," the phrase "Catholic liberal" never seems to sound redundant. This is partly a consequence of facile association: the Roman Catholic church a sort of monarchy; and partly illusion: Catholics do tend sometimes to be "Augustinian liberals" (John Roche's phrase), to be somewhat patient with human failure because man is sinful, and "sin," we like to kid ourselves, is a conservative notion, isn't liberal. But we might consider the following.

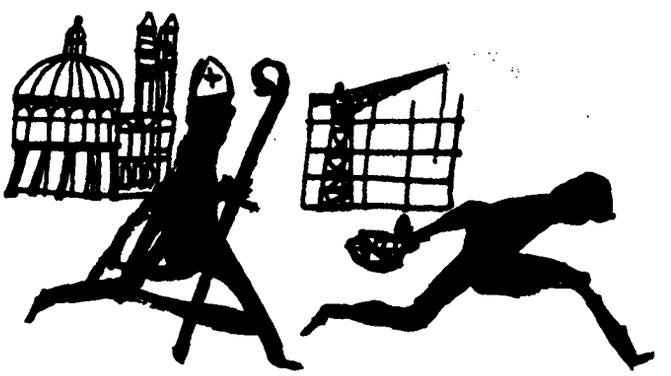
AMERICAN LIBERALISM at least since the New Deal has felt that capitalism, whatever its capacity to create expectations of a high standard of living, had to be controlled, its individualistic urges contained by social planning. If liberalism did not go so far as socialism's open animus against the capitalist ethic, it was nonetheless distrustful of capitalism left to capitalists. But in fact the traditional American liberal attitude has never been quite so distrustful of capitalism as traditional Catholic social thought has.

However the "Protestant Ethic" aided the "Spirit of Capitalism," intellectual Catholicism has generally been resistant to that spirit — even though it's true, as R. H. Tawney pointed out in modification of Max Weber's theory, that without the "capitalist spirit" of Venetian and Florentine bankers in Catholic Italy a nascent capitalism would hardly have expanded as it did. But I'm not in the habit of thinking of bankers, whatever their religious affiliations, as particularly responsive to social philosophy. Usury has never found a comfortable home in Catholic social thought. And Reinhold Niebuhr observed some years ago (while commenting on John XXIII's *Mater et Magistra* and Protestant surprise at its advocacy of the welfare state) that the social thought of the church in predominately Catholic countries had skipped over classical laissez-faire and retained much of the social and anti-atomistic ethos of medieval thought.

"Laissez-faire" simply does not trip easily over the tongues of intellectual Catholics outside the offices of *National Review* and the American Enterprise Institute (although I doubt that even there anyone really believes that the free competitive market really exists or is really desired by corporate board members). And without a faith that the market works best for the betterment of all so long as government makes the necessities of the market (including a little anti-competitive price-fixing), and not the betterment of all, its first priority, and without an uncomplicated belief in the justice of usury (call it what you will), it is absurd to speak of an endorsement of the capitalist spirit.

But this is to speak in a negative way, and it's perfectly possible for two people to distrust one thing and disagree on what they'd prefer in its place; it's possible to distrust capitalism in favor of some vision essentially at odds with the democratic socialism I'm clearly hinting at: for instance, some quasi-fascist Corporativism after *one* reading of Leo XIII's *Rerum Novarum* or Pius XI's *Quadragesimo Anno*. But, on the other hand, there is evidence of a Catholic distrust of capitalism closer to "mine." Some consideration of Pope John's great encyclical *Mater et Magistra* and some mental associations will reveal what I mean.

THERE IS LITTLE point in dwelling long on the clear liberal features, the "Christian Democratic" tone of *Mater et Magistra*: the concern for the just wage, the approval of labor unionism, the demand for full employment and balance between wages and prices, the insistence on the dignity of labor and the need for dignified working conditions, and such. Nor is there much point in more than noting the rather obvious "social democratic" features such as Pope John's endorsement of worker's consultation in management decisions and approval not only of social insurance and security but their



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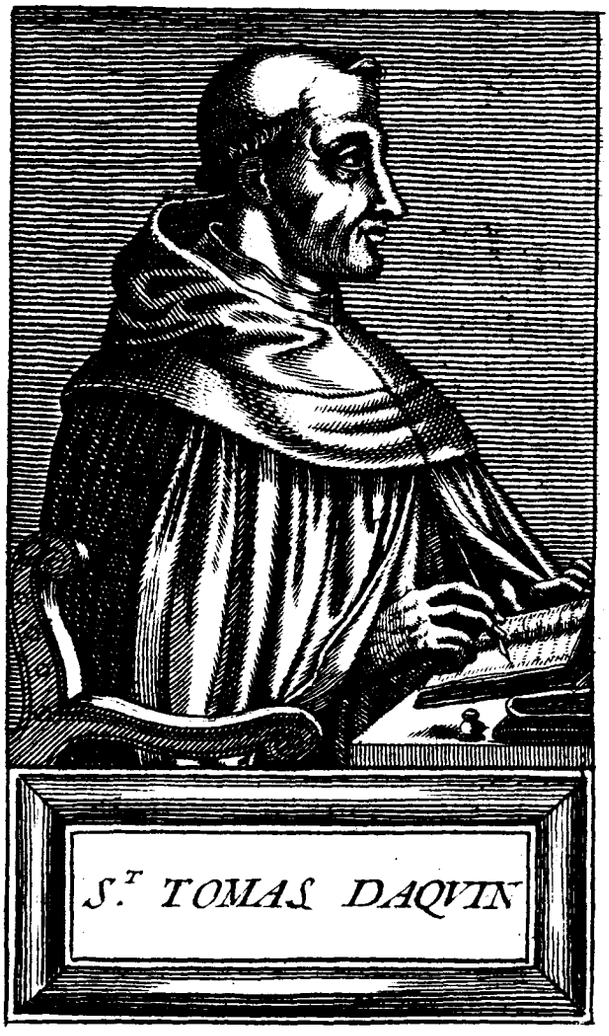
wider extension; for quite frankly such measures needn't mean all that much unless there is some radical redefinition of just property relations.

John's "opening to the left" is fundamentally at odds with the warning of Pius XI in *Quadragesimo Anno* in 1931 that although there was a clear difference between Communism and democratic Socialism, the latter having moderated its views on property and collectivism and having muted the notion of class war, Socialism and the church remained opposed to the extent that "No one can be at the same time a sincere Catholic and a true Socialist" — which opposition John dutifully repeats in his encyclical, in somewhat muted form, even while making the opening. But perhaps the two popes are not so fundamentally at odds on this issue after all, thirty years having passed between them, and since Pius wrote that "it may well come about that gradually the tenets of mitigated Socialism will no longer be different from the program of those who seek to reform human society according to Christian principles." Or it may well be — I think it is — that even as early as *Quadragesimo Anno* the tenets of "mitigated" Catholic reformism were undergoing a change, accelerated in *Mater et Magistra*, in the direction of "mitigated Socialism." I think there *is* some radical redefinition of just property relations.

To avoid the obfuscation conservatives generally like — we're talking about "productive property" obviously, not someone's house or garden or portable goods. I doubt that many (although I probably give more credit than is due) would disagree with John that "vigilance should be exercised and effective steps taken that class differences arising from disparity of wealth not be increased, but lessened so far as possible," for this can surely be taken to mean house, garden, and goods for all. But it might be somewhat displeasing to those who think primarily in terms of GNP to read that "National wealth . . . the economic prosperity of any people is to be assessed not so much from the sum total of goods and wealth possessed as from the distribution of goods according to norms of justice, so that everyone in the community can develop and perfect himself." For on the one hand this might suggest a modified kind of Chestertonian Distributism, of which there are echoes in *Mater et Magistra*, and "redistribution" has become a scare word for American conservatives old and new. And on the other hand, when John follows these remarks on the distribution of goods with the observation that since "large and medium size productive enterprises achieve rapid growth precisely because they finance replacement and plant expansion from their own revenues," the workers should share in those revenues beyond their wages because they help create the revenues, and when he follows this with a quotation from Pius XI's encyclical, "It is totally false to ascribe to a single factor of production what is in fact produced by joint activity; and it is completely unjust for one factor to arrogate to itself what is produced, ignoring what has been contributed by other factors," he is explicitly saying that wealth should be distributed not simply because the powerful should be charitable (a dominant theme of Leo's *Rerum Novarum*) but because wealth is



created partially by labor and *justice* demands that labor share fully in it — which is to take a considerable cut at the traditional privileges of capital upon which any traditional view of capitalism is based.

I'm being presumptuous enough to try to imagine a lively process of assumption in John's mind which informs his disparate remarks on productive property in separate parts of the encyclical. When he affirms that "artisan and farm enterprises of family type should be safeguarded and fostered, as should also cooperatives that aim to complement and perfect such enterprises," and that it is not less fitting "that the State make special provision for them in regard to instruction, taxes, credit facilities, social security, and insurance," I don't necessarily hear Chesterton's call in *The Outline of Sanity* for "taxation of contracts so as to discourage the sale of small property to big proprietors and encourage the break-up of big property among small proprietors" — although I'm listening — but I do hear not only *fostered* but *safeguarded*. Which suggests that the charitable restraint of big capital is not enough to rely upon. Neither is the invisible hand of the market: John early quotes Pius XI's recognition that "economic power has been substituted for the free marketplace," something some American classical economists still refuse to recognize (at least they tend to create market models to explain the functioning of an

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economy clearly guided by very visible grasping hands). And John is willing to sanction the nationalization of productive property, following Pius XI again, whom he quotes, "if these [enterprises] carry with them power too great to be left in private hands, without injury to the community at large" — although he appeals to Pius's "principle of subsidiarity" that what bears no threat to the commonweal should be left to the exercise of private moral responsibility.

HERE I'D LIKE to take a quirky look at Aquinas before returning to a quirkier look at the encyclicals. *Nationalization*. It's a kind of theft or robbery, from one obvious point of view. In the *Summa Theologiae* (2a 2ae, Question 66) Aquinas distinguishes in value and kind between "theft" (*furtum*) and "robbery" (*rapina*): robbery is the more detestable because more physical injury can be inflicted, although theft is not open, is done by stealth, is furtive. Nonetheless they are kindred acts. Is either ever justifiable?

Answering the question "is it possible for robbery not to be a sin?" Aquinas concludes, "There is no robbery where sovereigns exact from their subjects what is due to them for the good of the common estate, even to the extent of using force" so long as the demands are not extortionate; and answering the question "is theft justifiable in cases of necessity?" he decides that "in the case of necessity everything is common," that "If one is to speak quite strictly, it is improper to say that using somebody else's property taken out of extreme necessity is theft. For such necessity renders what a person takes to support his life his own." Of course what's "extortionate" and what's "extreme necessity" are probably going to be subjective, self-interested judgments. And of course there's no specific justification of nationalization here, even if "sovereign" can mean now the "sovereign State"; and there's no appeal to Aquinas on this point in the encyclicals. But on the other hand there's nothing in the entirety of Question 66, *"de furto et rapina,"* that's at odds with John and Pius on "Public Property" and they might have appealed to Aquinas on this point if they had been as willing as I am to risk being thought "Jesuitical" and to appreciate the irony. But the popes appeal to him so often, and that gets us to the major point.

Leo XIII: private property is a natural right, as St. Thomas says. Pius XI: private property is a natural right, as Pope Leo and, implicitly, St. Thomas say. John XXIII: private property is a natural right, as Popes Pius and Leo and St. Thomas say. Two matters occur to me. (1) Why is John so pronounced in stressing the *social* function of property, insisting that if you have it you have it in stewardship, and what's the rather ambiguous meaning of the following conjunction?: John repeats that "the right of private property is from the natural law itself" while in the preceding sentence he has summarized approvingly a teaching from Pius XII (1941 Pentecost Broadcast) to the effect that "the right of every man to use [material goods] for his own sustenance is prior even to the right of private ownership." And (2) what exactly *does* Aquinas say about natural rights and property? To the *Summa Theologiae* again, 2a 2ae, 66:

Aquinas asks, "is the possession of external goods natural to man?" In a sense, no: "The earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof"; however: "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, etc." Stewardship. "God has pre-eminent dominion over all things, and in his providence he ordered certain things for men's material support. This is why it is natural for man to have dominion over things in the sense of having the power to use them." This is to say nothing, however, of individual possession.

Then Aquinas asks, "is it legitimate for individual men to possess anything as their own?" Countering the apparent primitive communism of some early church fathers, he decides that it is, for reasons in line with Aristotle's teachings in the *Politics*: a person tends to take more care of something that's his sole responsibility; human affairs are organized more efficiently when a person "has his own responsibility to discharge" than they would be "if everybody cared for everything"; there's greater peace when "everyone is content with his task" than when "quarrels . . . break out amongst men who hold things in common without distinction."

But these are practical observations of administrative efficiency over what's held in stewardship (however one judges their prescience), not observations about natural law. "Community of goods," as a matter of fact, might itself be considered a dictate of natural law in the sense that man in the general, *mankind,* has been given by God usufruct of the earth; but neither communism nor private possession is dictated by natural law.

Rather—and rather emphatically!—"the distribution of property is a matter *not for natural law but, rather, human agreement,* which is what positive law is all about. . . . The individual holding of possessions is not, therefore, contrary to the natural law; it is what rational beings conclude as an *addition to the natural law*" (italics mine). And consequently, I add, if rational beings were to judge that collective possession were more reasonable, they could by human agreement fix upon such as an addition to the natural law and not in violation of it.

This is not to argue for either; it is to take the question of private property out of the realm of natural law where Aquinas, the pope's principal source, never put it, and to place it in the realm of human agreement, where Aquinas put it and where the thrust of John's arguments—however much his position constrains him to remain solidly within the encyclic tradition—tends to put it. Nor is any of this an argument for nationalization, except in those industries with "power too great": I have my ideas about which they are; their specificity is not to the point here. But it is to argue that

(1) John's teachings are perfectly in line with the priorities of social insurance and security of welfarist social democracy, or the latter is in line with the first,

and (2), given his remarks on the social function of property, on the distribution not only of wealth but of the decision-making process in the creation of wealth, and, in general, his suspicion of the conventional privileges of capital,

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the social and economic arguments of *Mater et Magistra* are perfectly in line with the programs of such as Martin Carnoy and Derek Shearer (*Economic Democracy*), Michael Harrington (*Decade of Decision*), and the "Meidner Plan" that Robert Heilbroner has outlined as "The Swedish Promise" (*New York Review,* December 4, 1980).

Not nationalization *per se* (about as likely in the U.S. as multiple-candidate elections in the U.S.S.R., and probably about as meaningful), but economic reform beyond profit-sharing through what the "economic democrats" call "the reconstruction of economic decision-making through democratic worker- and worker/consumer controlled production," a truly mixed economy in which public holding companies would gain controlling interests in some key industries in order to police costs and prices, and what Harrington calls "the democratization of the investment function," to make sure not only that capital formation occurs but that capital is invested in socially necessary enterprises and that industry is patrolled to make sure its decisions do not run counter to the commonweal even if the decisions are seductively profitable at the moment.

Would this mean "not-capitalism"? That's not important except to the degree, high I suppose, that people invest emotions in labels. On the one hand, it's not traditional socialist nationalization, so I suppose it's reformed capitalism. On the other, if a given corporation cannot decide on its own to move its plant several states away and leave a town destitute, then in some sense it's no longer private property since its "owners" cannot dispose of it as they wish on a whim while fiddling profit receipts.

WHAT AM I after? Why this digging around in Catholic thought? First, it pleases me in an ironic way, having been brought up in a Protestant tradition economically quietistic, the quietism usually amounting to a passive endorsement of an economic status quo. And then too, a democratic socialist with markedly conservative cultural inclinations, I am taken by the sheer traditionalism of Catholic social thought, tradition being to me not something frozen in the past but a living process of communication across the ages in which first words are not forgotten. From Chrysostum's primitive communist declaration that "wealth is common to thee and to thy fellow servants, just as the sun is common, the earth, the air. . . . To grow rich without injustice is impossible" and Basil's that "the bread you keep belongs to the hungry. The gold you have hidden in the ground belongs to the needy" to Aquinas's cautious defense of private possession according to "human agreement" modified by the declaration that "in the case of necessity everything is common" to John's insistence that economic prosperity is defined not by "the sum total of goods and wealth" but by "the distribution of goods according to norms of justice."

But I have other motives, of course, devious intentions. A successful social democracy, economic democracy—call it what you will—couched in quasi-Marxist rhetoric is not a high likelihood. The "economic democrats" argue that the appeal has to be made in American populist terms, more or less. I'm not that sure that those are so compelling as Christian terms. *Catholic* terms!, I hear someone warning me. I'd be hard put to prove that a Catholic pronouncement does not remain the bugaboo it's often been in the past, except for followers of those mass-media revivalists and such, or to prove that John XXIII was "the Protestants' pope" not simply because he seemed a nice, friendly uncle. But I do submit that in an age so taken with ecumenism there's the barest chance that a coherent Catholic social ideology might make some dent in Protestant social thought—assuming perhaps too hopefully it's something voting Catholics would buy. At the least Catholics might be able to advise the Protestant and Orthodox National Council of Churches that there's something worldly it could do in place of making its asinine pronouncements about the Middle East so pleasing to the PLO.

And I'd be hard put to prove that anti-Catholicism is no longer the "anti-Semitism of the educated," the educated so often now secularists. For what I've been talking about is really the extension of democracy, and I can easily imagine a wry response to a democratic counsel from Catholic sources, a wry response from the "educated" who are not educated to the irony that in the intellectual environs of a papal monarchy the distributist ethic has lived longer than it has anywhere else unless it's in the environs of a rabbinic nobility. In any case, I'd recall an argument Chesterton made sixty years ago in *What I Saw in America* while discussing democracy, the secularist spirit, and Catholicism.

Chesterton remarks that before the "growth of nineteenth-century enlightenment and experiment; a triumph of science over superstition," during an age of faith if only the faith of Deism, men were at least ashamed of brutal inequalities such as slavery, while with the emergence of the secular enlightenment and attendant "scientific sophistries" it was "that brotherhood was really disputed," that impressive *theories* of inequality arose to justify this or that. But, "Against all this irresistible force stood one immovable post." For, "The dogmatic type of Christianity, especially the Catholic type of Christianity, had riveted itself irrevocably to the manhood of all men. Where its faith was fixed by creeds and councils it could not save itself even by surrender. It could not gradually dilute democracy, as could a merely sceptical or secular democrat."

One can charge Chesterton with mighty exaggeration historically, but not prescriptively. Like many converts, he knew more about the creeds of the church than many born to it. The point about "Catholic democracy . . . is not that it is necessarily at any moment more democratic, it is that its indestructible minimum of democracy really is indestructible. And by the nature of things that mystical democracy was destined to survive, when every other sort of democracy was free to destroy itself. And whenever democracy destroying itself is suddenly moved to save itself, it always grasps at a rag or tag of that old tradition that alone is sure of itself."

I'm not sure of the historical truth of that last sentence; but, imperatively, it's a good thought I'm obviously willing to think, and I judge that others might think it too.

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THE BUDGET BREAKS FAITH WITH THE POOR

On not feeding the hungry

NANCY AMIDEI

IT HAS BEEN argued that last November conservatives won, not conservatism; that liberals lost, not liberalism. Someone should tell President Reagan. His budget will devastate the very groups and programs that liberals have traditionally supported. The food assistance programs are a case in point.

Our national record in relieving serious hunger and malnutrition is one of the major success stories of recent times. In the late 1960s, health professionals documented serious problems of hunger and malnutrition among low-income Americans. A Field Foundation report in 1967 and the Ten State National Nutrition Survey gave ample proof that poor Americans were at serious nutritional risk. At that time there was very little in the way of food assistance: a food stamp program in only a few hundred counties, inadequate surplus foods, a school lunch program priced out of reach of poor children. There were no school breakfasts, no programs for the elderly, no special supplemental foods for *W*omen, *I*nfants, and *C*hildren (WIC); overall there was very little for the hungry poor.

Today all that is changed. Twenty-two million Americans, many of them victims of the recession (the food stamp program grows by over one million people for every one percent rise in unemployment) use food stamps. Twenty-seven million children participate in the school lunch program (one-third of them for free); three-and-a-half million children get breakfast at school. The elderly now qualify for congregate meals and Home Delivered Meals, while 2.2 million nutritionally vulnerable pregnant and nursing mothers and their young children get specially nutritious foods through WIC.

So, when the Department of Agriculture conducted its most recent food consumption survey, and when the Field Foundation sent an even bigger team of health professionals out to poor communities across the nation in 1977, they found nutrition much improved among the poor. There are still people with too little to eat and with poor diets, but the kind and extent of serious malnutrition that were so visible in the late 1960s are no longer to be found. In the world of social programs, that is a minor revolution. And the reason, the health professionals said, was the broader availability of the federal food assistance programs—particularly food stamps and WIC.

It is these highly successful programs, these programs which in fact "work" and have made such a difference in the lives of poor Americans, that are under attack and would be dismantled by the Reagan economic program. Despite the president's claims that he will protect the "truly needy," and certain programs or groups (like free school meals), the cuts in food assistance hit every age and population group among the poor, the "truly needy" very much among them.

Overall, of the first $34 billion worth of reductions announced by the president, $16-19 billion (roughly half) comes from programs on which the poor depend. These same programs will also absorb a major share of the nearly $15 billion in additional cuts.

For the food programs alone, the reductions are dramatic, particularly when viewed against the backdrop of the past three years. Three times since 1977, the food stamp program was amended to make it tighter and more restrictive.

In that process over eight hundred thousand people lost their eligibility for food stamps, and all food stamp benefits were effectively reduced by being pegged to food store prices four to sixteen months out of date. Those changes saved $600 million. At the same time, the child nutrition programs were reduced by $500 million (a cost which has been passed on to local public and private schools).

So when this year's budget exercise is touted as treating all groups equally, and as requiring all elements of society to share the pain, the operating premise simply isn't true. Poor people who depend on the federal food programs started out behind, and they get farther behind with every new announcement on the budget.

IN ONE WAY or another, the president's proposals to reduce spending in the food stamp program will affect virtually everyone that depends on it: those who work but earn very low wages will be especially hard hit; the disabled and elderly people with high medical bills will get fewer food stamps; families with children will find their food stamps reduced by more than one of the proposals. It is difficult to discover the social policy design beneath these proposals. Those who take the low-paying jobs will be penalized for their efforts, and neither the very young nor the very old will be spared; employable and unemployable will both be worse off, the disabled as

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certainly as the physically sound. It is almost as though those designing the reductions cared about the amounts to be saved but not about the effects of those savings.

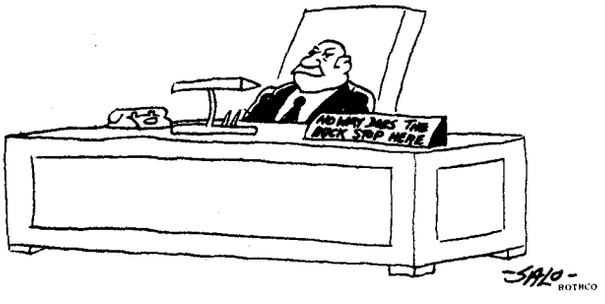
The proposal to save $600 million by giving fewer food stamps to the families of children with access to a free school lunch provides a useful illustration. Much was made of the claim that the free school lunch program was "protected." And indeed, none of the budget reductions comes directly from the budget line for that program. But free school lunch does not exist in splendid isolation either for individual families, or for schools. And the president's other proposals indirectly, devastatingly, *do* affect the free school lunch. The results are no different than they would be if the specific budget item had been reduced: in many places there will no longer be a free school meal provided, and for many families the free school meal will represent a costly loss of badly needed food stamps.

The theory behind President Reagan's proposal rests on the false assumption that the food stamp program gives families enough for three full meals and that a free school lunch is thus a "duplication." On the strength of that, and in order to make the idea administratively workable, every food stamp family with children in a school that offers lunch will have its food stamps reduced by $12 a month for every child—whether or not the child eats a lunch at school. Since school officials cannot keep daily count of who eats meals and who doesn't, a family's food stamps would be lowered automatically. Thus even in the case of children home sick from school, they will be fed by a family with even lower family food resources.

This is especially unfortunate because the food stamp program does not provide enough for three meals daily—a fact acknowledged by the Department of Agriculture and in 1977 by the Congress. At best the food stamp program provides $2.00 per person each day for food; on the average, the benefits are more like $1.30 per person each day. Since the food stamp program does not provide enough for three meals daily, it is hard to understand just what the school lunch "duplicates."

The question may quickly become moot, however, because the spend-reductions overall are so severe that many school food service managers doubt they will be able to continue operation of a program at all. Less money is less money; the fact that the reductions do not come from the budget item labeled "free school lunch" is less important.

So the president's proposals prove to have a particularly cruel twist. The free school lunch is somehow to be "protected" but not the families whose children need it, and the protection is so clumsily designed that it will jeopardize the program's future.



Similar contradictions abound. By continuing to keep food stamps four to fifteen months out of date, $423 million will be saved. But that hurts the poorest most of all, and is no respecter of other "protected" groups like the disabled or social security retirees (their situation is already tenuous: those whose only income is average social security benefits will be cut off the food stamp program altogether; those with lower-than-average social security payments will now get lower-than-otherwise food stamp benefits).

The elderly who are not only poor but who have high monthly medical bills as well are being asked to make do with fewer food stamps so that $25 million can be saved. Those who want to work but are responsible for dependents who might otherwise require costly institutional care (retarded adults, a frail spouse, very young children) will not be permitted to deduct the cost of that dependent care separately so that another $39 million can be saved.

Food stamp users are generally very poor: household income averages about $300 a month. Over one-half have no assets and no car. Those with relatively higher "paper incomes" are people with exceptional expenses which severely limit the money they have available for food and for which they are currently permitted some deductions (much like the deductions taxpayers may claim in figuring tax liability): high medical or utility bills, expenses related to work. Limiting food stamp eligibility on the basis of a gross dollar-income amount (in this case 130 percent of the poverty line) will be less fair, but it will save money — $275 million. And it will eliminate one million people from the program, most of them elderly, disabled, sick, or currently working at low-paying jobs. Another $450 million in savings comes from a variety of changes in the ways that income or benefits are to be calculated from now on. Finally, $300 million will be cut from food assistance to Puerto Rico.

Taken together these proposals will save the president $2.1 billion by asking those who now have only 44 cents per meal to manage on less.

Another staggering cut of almost $2.3 billion (out of roughly $5 billion) will come from programs for child nutrition: parents earning $5.50 an hour will find their children's lunch going up from 20 cents to 70 cents; 2.3 million poor children will no longer get a lunch in the summertime when school is out; 700,000 pre-school children of working parents will no longer get a meal at their day care center; over 700,000 women and children will lose the benefits of WIC. Each of these programs will be reduced by 30 percent, 40 percent or more. In many places school-based programs will simply close. In the case of WIC, the reductions could result in a higher incidence of low-birth-weight infants born to poor mothers—with all the increase in sensory and neurological handicaps and higher infant death rates that that implies.

For those of us who remember when hunger was being "discovered" in America, and who have seen the difference that the food assistance programs have made in people's lives,

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the Reagan budget has a particularly cruel edge to it. We know what it has meant to have these programs in place; we know what it will mean in human suffering to dismantle them. Whatever else has happened to poor people during these hard years of unemployment and recession, they have at least had the hope of being able to feed themselves.

Some say that these are not the times for tales of starving children; that bigger issues are at stake than sentimental images of hungry people. They're wrong. Beyond the rhetoric, the billions, and the economic theories, this and every other budget are fundamentally about choices, and about all of those whose lives will be affected. This economic plan is not some abstract test of loyalty to Mr. Reagan or the country, but raises the issue of whether people who are victims of recession, age, or accidents of fate will be allowed to eat. We could make other choices. We could choose to distribute the tax burden more evenly, or require that the Pentagon practice the same economies being demanded of every other public agency. It is possible to be both fair to this country's workers, and sensitive to the needs of this country's poor.

If the president's proposals are adopted, we will have made a choice. We will have chosen for some parents that they no longer be allowed to feed their children, will have chosen for some of the sick and disabled and elderly that they should be more sick, less able, more frail. We will have turned back the clock to that time just a decade and a half ago when doctors did indeed find children starving in America. Worse than that, we will have said to millions of Americans that we no longer care. It is a sad commentary on the hopes so many people had in electing their new president.

'COMMON WAY'—FOR RIGHTS WITHIN THE CHURCH

Another surprise from Poland

RONALD MODRAS

POLAND DOES NOT cease to surprise. The land that has given us Pope John Paul II, Lech Walesa, and the most sustained challenge to Communist authoritarianism, is also the home of a movement of base communities that is altering the image of the Polish Catholic church as monolithic and uncompromisingly conservative. Calling itself the Common Way (*Wspolna Droga*), this movement is committed to working for human rights within the church. Last year it made contact with the Association for the Rights of Catholics in the Church (ARCC), a U.S. group whose president is James Finn, a former *Commonweal* associate editor, and whose vice-president is Sister Teresa Kane. ARCC is currently establishing relations with similar Western European groups interested in developing a charter of rights in the church, and in the process encountered the Polish movement.

The Common Way movement consists today of about fifty base communities comprising approximately 1,500 members. The groups exist mostly in southwestern Poland, in Upper Silesia, historically a region heavily influenced by Germany with strong affinities to the West. Josef Biskup, a Catholic layman and technical engineer, wrote recently to Leonard Swidler of ARCC's international liaison committee as a representative of Common Way's coordinating committee:

"How long have we existed? Over ten years, but the movement actually began more than fifteen years ago, when Dr. Gustav Klapuch, a professor of theology, would meet for catechetical dialogue and discussion with intellectuals. He had begun to discuss human rights as moral principles and how human rights correspond with the teaching of the Bible and the teaching of Christ about the dignity of the human person and love of neighbor. He taught that if the church was to be credible in its demand for human rights from the state, it must first realize human rights within itself. As a result, Dr. Klapuch, a priest, had the canonical mission of his theological teaching position withdrawn (similar to the much later case of Professor Küng).

"Then followed our activity as informal base communities with the goal of realizing human rights within the church. We first met in church halls and in a retreat house, but we were forced to leave. Dr. Klapuch was transferred to the smallest pastoral position in the diocese, a chapel with about six hundred people."

Biskup writes how Klapuch, undaunted, continued to meet with the base communities and to serve as their theological advisor. But then, in April of last year, the movement's newsletter, *Our Way* (*Nasza Droga*), published a factual account of the conflict between Hans Küng and Rome, based on material from the independent West German Catholic periodical, *Publik Forum*. "Dr. Klapuch was given an ultimatum: either give up work with our base communities or be suspended and our groups declared to be a sect. We had no way out. . . . We work now without a priest but wish to remain loyal to the faith and to the church.

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"Now we meet only in the homes of our members. We begin with a reading from the Bible and seek to find confirmation of human rights in the Scriptures. The diocesan chancery does not want any dialogue with us. They apparently think that human rights should not be sought within the church since they originate outside the church. In the area of Christian unity, we are allowed only to pray and not undertake any contact.

"Our tactics? At first we entered into written polemics with chancery officials. Some groups were even a bit aggressive. Later we came to the position that we must be an example of love of neighbor, including adversaries. Therefore, no polemics, no conflict with the bishops. That is the rule in the inner life of the groups as well: exchange of ideas, yes; polemics, no. The exchange of ideas with the bishops has been one-sided. We send written position papers to the bishops but do not receive any answers and have not been invited to any conversation. We send our monthly newsletter, *Our Way,* to the diocesan officials and to Pope John Paul II.

"Our initiatives? We have written well-known theologians in Europe, asking whether human rights have a place in the church. Most theologians, along with Cardinals Alfrink and Ratzinger, have said yes, and indeed in greater measure in the church than in political societies. We have also worked for the introduction in each parish of adult catechesis conjoined with discussion. The pastors agreed, but in the beginning gave instructions from the pulpit as they might a sermon, without discussion. Now, at least in the cities, we have catechesis with discussion."

BISKUP GOES ON TO describe some of the position papers that the Common Way movement has formulated and sent to the bishops. They are carefully qualified but clearly not conservative. On the involvement of the clergy in political and social activity: "A flat prohibition would be against human rights." On mandatory celibacy for priests: "Every person has a right to establish a family." A recent memorandum on capital punishment describes it as "incompatible with the teaching of the Gospel."

Although Common Way began as an exclusively Catholic movement, Polish Protestants were accepted when they asked to join. The movement is now the singular example of practical grass-roots ecumenism. "At present," Biskup writes, "in light of the radio broadcast of the Mass every Sunday, we are writing that religious freedom and tolerance demands that there also be a broadcast of an ecumenical radio program."

"How do we operate? Each of our groups is autonomous. There are no officers, no membership lists, no dues. We give voluntary donations for only our monthly newsletter, *Our Way,* which is distributed without charge. Each group has to work out its own theme. The one thing holding the groups together is the issue of human rights as moral principles. Except for a coordinating committee of six persons, our movement has no administration. We meet each month in a different home. The host prepares the topic and leads the discussion. Three or four times a year, a meeting of all the groups is organized around a topic that interests all of them. Since we are informal, our groups do not receive any financial support. Our movement and our newsletter are supported with only our own pocket money.

"What kind of topics do we work on? We have tried to address such questions as: Where are the limits to freedom? To tolerance? To obedience? When should a person seek a compromise, and when should one refuse to compromise? What is the impact of urban culture on human rights? Is criticism of the church allowed? Other topics have been : Psychic health and human rights. The rights of children. The problem of the Christian conscience. Church and State. Christian marriage and the family. One's relationship to work. What is more important in the life of a Christian, liturgy or moral principles? The relationship of religion to life. Recently, also the topics: The church and the labor unions; the church and strikes; solidarity with the oppressed."

THE REACTION of Poland's hierarchy to the Common Way movement has been predictably wary and unsupportive, at times even repressive. The Polish bishops view such lay movements as weakening the centralized authority of the hierarchy. Given the official atheism of Poland's government and its desire to break the hold of Catholicism on the Polish people, the bishops fear movements like Common Way may prove divisive and dangerous.

Members of the Common Way movement insist that they are loyal to Christian faith and to the church, but believe it necessary to press for reforms. Their newsletter justifies their program with appeals not only to the Bible but also to recent Vatican declarations on human rights. The 1971 Synod of Bishops, for example, stated that "anyone who ventures to speak to people about justice must first be just in their eyes." The 1974 Synod of Bishops was even more explicit: "From her own experience the church knows that her ministry of fostering human rights in the world requires continual scrutiny and purification of her own life, her laws, institutions, and policies. . . . In the church as in other institutions and groups, purification is needed in internal practices and procedures, and in relationships with social structures and systems whose violations of human rights deserve censure."

But in 1969, even before those two synods of bishops, and long before the organization of ARCC in this country or

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The American Association for the Rights of Catholics in the Church, mentioned in this article, was founded, "to institutionalize a collegial understanding of church in which decision-making is shared and accountability is realized among Catholics of every kind and condition" (ARCC newsletter). The Association "affirms that there are fundamental rights which are rooted in the humanity and baptism of all Catholics."

Readers who wish more inforation about ARCC should address inquiries to P.O. Box 3932, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19146.

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anything similar in Western Europe, the Common Way movement had formulated its statement of purpose:

THE COMMON WAY MOVEMENT

- is a religious, Christian, church movement;
- is founded, as a church movement, upon what is essential and inviolable in the church;
- declares the need for an extensive renewal of what is secondary and open to change in the church;
- aims at renewal by especially emphasizing the dignity of the ordinary, simple person in the church;
- strives for freedom of people to express their opinions in the church;
- maintains that one can go on to productive, general discussions of other problems in the church only after attaining these goals;
- holds that the human rights for which it struggles have their origin in the rights conferred by human dignity;
- struggles so that human rights might be realized more fully in the church than in other societies;
- regards its mission as all the more important, since the chief forms of evil in our world today result from violations of basic human rights;
- realizes that human rights are a problem not only in the church but in our society today throughout the human race;
- does not have social or political changes as its purpose, because it is not a social organization or a political party but rather a religious movement.

A pope, an independent labor union movement, and now a widespread movement for human rights in the church. Poland has long remained *terra incognita* to the West. As increasing interest comes to be focused on it, one wonders if there are other surprises in store for us.

Screen

TOO POOPED TO POP

RALPH BAKSHI'S ANIMATION

THE ART of comedy requires quick cuts. The art of animation, as practiced by Ralph Bakshi, requires short-cuts.

The two should not be confused. In the old Walt Disney features like *Fantasia,* each frame might entail eight separate drawings done on transparencies and then superimposed on one another in an animation stand. This is what gives the wonderful sense of depth and space that every scene in a Disney movie has. But nobody now could afford to run the illustration factories Disney managed in his prime. So in *American Pop,* as in his earlier features, Bakshi has had to resort to certain short-cuts.

Instead of animation, for instance, he sometimes does animatics. This is a technique in which a single still or a brief sequence of stills is used to illustrate a scene rather than animate it. In *American Pop,* which traces the history of pop music from vaudeville to punk rock, Bakshi uses animatic techniques most noticeably in early scenes where the audience in a saloon or a music hall has to be shown. Getting more footage out of these drawings allows Bakshi to put more into them. A whole array of illustrator's tricks — stylizations using line like cross-hatching — suddenly come into play and then vanish again. This may enrich the texture of Bakshi's cartoon for a few seconds, but he still can't pay Paul without robbing Peter. While fancier, the drawing is now static. In order to sustain at least the illusion of animation, Bakshi therefore moves the camera in these shots, panning or tracking across the immobile art work. The trouble is that it is only the technicalities of his movie, not the story, that require the camera to move at these moments. The shot strikes us the way unnecessary camera movement would in any movie — as being pointless. Instead of an enhancement, a diversion from the ordinarily flat, sketchy backgrounds, the shot becomes an intrusion, a disturbance, an interruption to the styleless style of Bakshi's animation.

Because his style *does* have to be styleless — flat, simple, unelaborated for the most part — Bakshi has stuck to naturalistic stories with human characters and *bildungsroman* plots. If you use today's abbreviated animation techniques on animals, you get something about as affecting as *Crusader Rabbit.* The animals constantly remind the viewer that this is a cartoon he's watching, and as a consequence he remains aware of the art work. With human characters, the viewer more readily sees a cartoon the way he does a live-action movie, as if it were real life. This makes him oblivious to the cartoonishness of it. It also keeps him from asking himself why this movie should have been made as a cartoon in the first place. The whole aesthetic of the cartoon is so extraneous to *American Pop* that Bakshi actually had his sketch men work from photographs of live models acting out the script, posing for each shot to be drawn.

So far as I can see, the only reason to make *American Pop* as a cartoon is that it would have been too expensive to make as a live feature. The film is a *Godfather*-like saga of four generations of a single family involved, one way or another, in pop music. Doing this story as an animation not only allows its innumerable, far-flung locations and period scenes to be handled cheaply, it allows a certain amount of ellipsis in the narrative. It permits the film to have an illustrative quality which would seem stilted and jumpy with real characters and situations. Again, Bakshi's talent, both economically and artistically, is for the short-cut.

The result is a peculiarly amorphous, purposeless movie. On the one hand, it's not really about pop music (only one or two songs are even performed in their entirety) so much as it's about the history of organized crime and the sub-culture of drugs in America. On the other hand, its attention to history is pretty random, too, as when it mixes up Woody Guthrie with Jack Kerouac and has the third generation of its family, Tony,

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doing some thirties-style hoboing during the fifties. As one monochromatic historical setting replaces another, the only area where Bakshi tries to render some detail and keep the action alive is in his characters' facial expressions, which he likes to show in close-up. But even the faces are bizarrely flaccid and inexpressive. Each of them moves like a waterbed on which somebody has just lain down. In fact, you might say Bakshi's whole film moves that way.

COLIN L. WESTERBECK, JR.

Art

DISHING IT OUT

JUDY CHICAGO'S 'DINNER PARTY'

WIDELY ACCLAIMED as the nonpareil of feminist art, *The Dinner Party* is moving around the country like an itinerant revivalist, abetted by populist resentments and generating its own Awakening. Despite the political rhetoric and iconoclastic posture of its promoters, the exhibition proves that there's still a lot of life left in that old time religion.

Judy Chicago is a West Coast minimal sculptor and a self-styled standard bearer in "the class struggle based on the division between men and women." *The Dinner Party* purports to be a serious statement on the history of women in Western civilization (". . . with the additional meaning of a re-interpretation of The Last Supper"). In reality, it is a crude rehash of some very traditional notions served up with the enthusiasm of a religious crusade. The combination of opportunism, evangelical intent, and entrepreneurial drive and technique that marks the production and merchandising of the piece make it as American as Billy Sunday. The zealous espousal of it by women's groups across the country derives from the same anti-intellectualism, the same suspicion of analysis and power of discrimination, that has long been a component of native politics and grass-roots religion.

The Dinner Party opened in San Francisco in 1979. It traveled to Houston and Boston in early 1980 and two months ago left New York's Brooklyn Museum where it had been held over by popular demand. Negotiations are under way to take the show on the road again in 1981 to Chicago and Vancouver. The cost of storage (over one thousand dollars per month) makes it feasible to keep the show moving until a permanent home can be found or funded for the purpose.

The format of the exhibition is a triangular table covering one thousand square feet and laid with thirty-nine place settings representing thirty-nine women from the mythical past to the present. The dinner guests range from Ishtar ("Great Goddess of Mesopotamia, the female as giver and taker of life, whose power was infinite") and Amazon ("Embodiment of Warrior Women who fought to preserve gynocratic societies"), through Aspasia ("Scholar, philosopher, and leader of women after the eclipse of female power") and on to Virginia Woolf and Georgia O'Keeffe.

The attributes of each woman, real or imaginary, are summarized by a serving-platter-sized porcelain vulva more or less suggestive of an open flower. Each plate has its own flatware, embroidered runner, chalice (Chicago's term), and napkin. The plates rest on custom-designed platforms which tilt them toward the viewer at . . . well, at a pelvic angle. This is what Chicago refers to as her "butterfly-vagina" imagery, developed in response to women's "deep cultural hunger" for affirmative symbols.

After the fundamentalism of the cross and of the flag, we now have the fundamentalism of the vagina.

The appeal of *The Dinner Party*, and of the feminist art movement as a whole, lies in its stated desire to dissolve the boundaries between "high" and "low" art. In effect, to take art away from the highbrows and city-slickers and put it back in the hands of the people where it belongs. The anti-hierarchical aims of *The Dinner Party*, its folkish desire to pit intellect against feeling and its willingness to play on the susceptibilities of its audience, is a continuation of the fundamentalist impulse in American Protestantism. Behind the radical-sounding vocabulary of Chicago's supporters is the conservative refrain voiced by Gerald Smith, one of the right-wing leaders in the old evolution debate: "I am not familiar with the artistic masterpieces of Europe, but I do say this tonight: I understand the hearts of the American people."

To make sure the didactic nature of the imagery doesn't go unnoticed, the installation includes a massive amount of print. Like the creation of the earth, *The Dinner Party* begins with the word. There are the 999 names of Significant Women inscribed in a schoolgirl's hand on the 2,300-tile floor under the table. There are the walls, covered with more Names and Dates, that look and read like a fold-out time-line in a grammar school history text. There are the *Dinner Party* books on sale at the entrance to the show. (Anchor Press has a boxed two-volume set, *The Complete Dinner Party*, on the plates and on the needlework, available for $29 in paperback. A third volume is in the planning.) And also around the walls are Chicago's own recitals of the aim and origin of the piece: "I first became interested in china painting when I saw a beautiful hand-painted plate in an antique store window in Oregon in 1971. . . . I started painting on 14-inch porcelain plates which were imported from Japan."

The lackluster prose, with its earnest attention to irrelevant detail, is indicative of *The Dinner Party*'s overriding sensibility.

The preachiness of the exhibition is outdone only by the prettiness of it. This is a very pretty show — in the way that limited edition plates marketed by the Royal Dutch Horticultural Society are pretty. Chicago's plates are the Hummel figurines of the feminist movement.

It is the vapid prettiness of the imagery, not its explicit sexual reference, that aligns the exhibition with *Playboy* and *Penthouse*. It shares with the air-busted nudes in center-fold

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displays an insidious refusal to regard the real thing. By substituting titillation for discernment, *The Dinner Party* distorts the women it pretends to commemorate.

Emily Dickinson ("Embodiment of women's struggle to find their own voice") is honored with a flirtatious, multi-tiered pink lace crotch. The very woman whose disappointment over critical rejection led her deeper into mortal privacy is here turned bottoms-up for the public to gape at. The ruthlessness and stark angularity of her observations, the sheer granite of her inventiveness, the anguish of her isolation — all of it reduced to a frothy Victorian teacake.

Virginia Woolf ("Pioneer in creating a female form language in literature"), a woman with a profound and imperious genius for making distinctions, is just one more floral orifice in Chicago's line-up. Either Chicago doesn't know or doesn't care that Woolf insisted repeatedly: "Any emphasis, either of pride or of shame, laid consciously on the sex of a writer is not only irritating but superfluous."

Georgia O'Keeffe ("Pioneer in creating a female form language in art") is equally misrepresented by tendrilar pastels that bear little relation to the span and vigor of the woman's work. O'Keeffe ransacks the spectrum, using black the way Matisse used it — as pure color. In addition to flowers, she has painted buildings and badlands, skulls, rocks, fossils and abstractions. Refusing to acknowledge narrowly sexual interpretations of her work. O'Keeffe set aside an entire page of her autobiography for the single sentence: "I made you take time to look at what I saw and when you took time to really notice my flower you hung all your own associations with flowers on my flower and you wrote about my flower as if I think and see what you think and see of the flower — and I don't."

The place setting designed for the biblical Judith, heroine of the apocryphal Book of Judith, is an indication of Chicago's relationship to "the masterpieces of Europe." It is also a clear gauge of Chicago's estimation of the critical capacities of her audience. Here, the coy combination of hinderparts and kitsch totally obliterates both the stature of Judith and the mythic proportions of her act.

In all extant representations of Judith — in medieval tapestries, on Italian majolica, through seventeenth and eighteenth century easel paintings — the emphasis is on the lethal strength, not the sexuality of Judith. Her weapon is universally depicted as an object of regard, suitable to the ferocity of her deed and to the nature of Old Testament vengeance. But Chicago pays no attention to the importance of scale in producing the appropriate sense of wonder and dread. Why bother? Women, silly gooses, will never notice so long as it's pretty enough. (This seems to be the reasoning behind the entire production.) So here we are given a tiny, doll-sized knife richly embroidered on the runner beneath the plate and embellished with — ah, yes — metallic thread. This lovely little knife couldn't scratch a Ken doll let alone decapitate a tyrant. Instead of providing her audience with the emblem of a heroine, Chicago puts out a bit of frippery that comes foolishly close to the insignia on a Shriner's hat. The redeemer of a people is just another sorority princess playing house.

The vulgarity of *The Dinner Party* is less in the iconography than in its abuse of sincerity. Nothing human is inappropriate to art. Genitalia are as amenable to creative interpretation as a hand or a clavicle. The problem here is its inane solemnity. Chicago expects to be bound in morocco. The expectation is fatal to its stated feminist aim.

If only Chicago were clowning, if there were some hint of the comic in these "butterfly-vagina" plates. But no, the nonsense is dished straight up. The exhibition *might* have been a satiric rejoinder to the old canard that the center of a woman's creativity is between her legs. But that would have required the hilarity of a Marcel Duchamp or the wit of Red Grooms. Chicago has more in common with Carl McIntire than with either of these. And so the seriousness of the show reaffirms the notion it sets out to demolish: turn 'em upside down and they all look alike.

The incongruity of the imagery and its sober feminist purpose is particularly visible in the plate designed for the English composer Ethel Smyth. Here the vaginal opening is formed by the curve of — can you guess? — a baby grand.

Some years back, when Liberace commissioned a swimming pool in the shape of a grand piano, everybody got the gag. There were belly laughs all around. *The Dinner Party* has hardly been greeted with the same horse sense By some born-again inversion of logic, the stuff that would be recognized as a leveling device if the show were by — or about — men is instead met with the devotion reserved for the laying on of hands. The women who file worshipfully past this cunnilingus-as-communion table see nothing askew in Chicago's decision to represent the stature and variety of women's accomplishments by genitals only — as if women's achievements had more to do with the organic, instinctual make-up of women than with the ability of certain women at certain times, and for highly contingent reasons, to transcend the cultural limitations of gender.

The exhibition's guest book, filled with what amounts to a litany of ecstatic manifestations, tells a tale about the gullibility, the insensitivity to nuance and the need of Chicago's audience:

"What a gift! What a joy! I'll always see things differently now."

"For the first time I've been in touch with my own sexuality (I'm a male). Thank you."

"A very moving realization of the diversity of women — an inspiration in my future."

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"You've restored my sense of human community and my pride in myself as a woman — even if only momentarily."

The religiosity of the imagination toward which this show is directed is evident in the ecclesiastical trappings that are a crucial part of the packaging. The entryway to the exhibition is hung with six banners that announce the liturgical ambitions of *The Dinner Party*. Beginning here and continuing throughout, high craftsmanship is put to such witless conformity to jargon and sacramental pretensions that the technical expertise is rendered absurd.

Woven in the manner of French Aubusson tapestries, the banners herald a mythical "She" in biblical rhythms borrowed from the Book of Revelations: "And She Gathered all before Her/ And She made for them a Sign to See/ And lo They saw a Vision/ From this day forth Like in All things. . . ." Chicago reinforces the revivalist tenor of the piece in her own introduction: "*The Dinner Party* expresses the belief and hope that once reverence for the feminine is re-established on Earth, a balance will be restored to human existence and everywhere will be Eden once again."

The nature of Chicago's own reverence for the feminine is revealed by the fact that the *actual* cost, estimated into the millions, of this $250,000-step into Eden was absorbed by volunteer feminine labor. The five years of so-called collaborative effort that went into the making of Chicago's breakthrough in the class struggle between men and women was, in essence, one more round in the exploitation of co-religionists by a canny gospeler.

Unpaid workers, mostly young, anonymous women from inconspicuous places around the country, paid their own transportation to and from the West Coast workshops and their own living expenses for the duration of their participation in the construction of *The Dinner Party*. Only a few core people in the project received compensation. The key members of that core were the three *men* without whose technical skill *The Dinner Party* would not exist: Ken Gilliam, an industrial designer who worked full-time on substructure of the installation; Leonard Skura, the potter responsible for the actual production of the dinner plates; Jean Pierre Larochette, director of the San Francisco Tapestry Workshop which created the introductory banners. While salaries were certainly not large — no one is getting rich on *The Dinner Party* — the symbolic import of the difference between the salaried and the non-salaried is not to be ignored, particularly in a project that roots its appeal in the abolition of class distinctions.

Feminine self-sacrifice continues to keep the show afloat. Across the country, women have formed organizations for the express purpose of bringing *The Dinner Party* to their town. Women, in conjunction with Chicago's various public relations firms, continue to sponsor fund-raising events to maintain the non-profit corporation Chicago formed in 1977 to own *The Dinner Party*. A sizable portion of the high cost of transporting, assembling, and installing the piece (crated, it fills nearly two trucks) is absorbed at each of its stops by female volunteers.

The Brooklyn Museum estimated its costs at $75,000 to $100,000. Some of this was raised by Art, Letters and Politics, Judy Chicago's public relations firm in New York. A "significant amount," according to the museum's publicity director Judith Schwartz, was underwritten by the museum itself — with the hopes of getting it back through admissions and sales of *Dinner Party* slide sets, posters, postcards, and books. The rest was met, as Ms. Schwartz tells it, by individual women whose "sense of purpose and dedication goes beyond a job." Some of these women flew themselves to New York from California at their own expense in order "to be part of the installation." These are the women who saw the creation and exhibition of *The Dinner Party* as "the major accomplishment of their lives."

Propelled by the same mutually reinforcing strains of inspirational thinking and salesmanship that mark down-home religion, the supposedly radical feminist *Dinner Party* turns out to be yet another accommodation to prevailing male realities — in the hierarchy of its production methods, its funding structure, and its imagery.

MAUREEN MULLARKEY

(Maureen Mullarkey writes on art regularly for Commonweal.)

Books: THE LIBERALS & CITIZEN POWER

THE BACKYARD REVOLUTION:
UNDERSTANDING THE NEW CITIZEN MOVEMENT

Harry C. Boyte
Temple University Press, $14.95, 271 pp.

David J. O'Brien

IN THE characteristic cycles of American politics, progressives periodically interpret defeat in self-justifying terms. Overwhelmed by political reaction, consumer and welfare capitalism and cultural Babbitry in the 1920's, intellectuals, and reformers blamed their powerlessness on the people, the "boobs" and "yokels" of H.L. Mencken.

In the 1950's, stung by McCarthyism and the middle brow conformity of the Eisenhower era, liberals discovered that American popular culture had always been anti-intellectual, bigoted, and irrational. Led by Richard Hofstadter, tired progressives saw the mainstream American tradition as "intensely nationalistic, for the most part isolationist . . . fiercely individualistic and capitalistic." "American traditions show a strong bias in favor of equalitarian democracy," Hofstadter wrote, "but it has been a democracy in cupidity rather than a democracy of fraternity."

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Predictably, American liberals are in danger of adopting a similar reinterpretation of American popular democracy in light of the recent overthrow of liberal policies and politicians. Near hysterical reaction to the Moral Majority, despair in the face of popular votes slashing funds available to state and local governments, and righteous indignation at the success of New Right politics combine to suggest that the people are the problem and the isolation of their leaders is in fact a badge of honor. Former Senator George McGovern, for example, bewails the indefensible tactics of the New Right and speaks of "a dangerous trend that has been gathering force in recent years . . . the substitution of unthinking emotionalism and cleverly marketed extremism for reason and common sense in public affairs." Writing off popular concern about abortion and family life, McGovern admits no failure in dealing with the economy, the arms race or the environment, the "common sense" issues. The voters, and the people who do not vote, appear as inert, manipulated by the New Right. That the people might have their own concerns and agendas and that successful politics must ultimately serve their priorities occurs to today's liberals no more easily than it did to Mencken or Hofstadter. In the twenties the enemies of liberals were Roman Catholics and Methodists, the former the ignorant bourgeois bigots of *Studs Lonigan*, more pitied than hated, the latter the prohibition and anti-evolution zealots whose political success marked the failure of democracy. In the fifties, it was the new suburbanites, selfish, other-directed, affluent, content with the mindless drift of Eisenhower politics and the amiable sweetness of Fred Waring and the Pennsylvanians. Who will play the role of villain in the 80's: right-to-lifers, ardent evangelicals, ordinary people, dumb enough to deny that democracy really requires abortion clinics, and easy bail for violent offenders, or uneducated enough to refuse the choices of high property taxes or low public services, urban decay or gentrification?

Harry Boyte reminds us in his passionately optimistic account of citizen activism that progressive politics require voter support. In seeking to do things *for* the people, liberals have all too often threatened the very foundations of popular democracy. Conservatives destroy neighborhoods to broaden the tax base, liberals to provide more efficient development; business erodes families by imposing poverty and joblessness, liberals by institutionalizing dependency. The New Right would use the people's fears to justify inequality and legitimate the status quo, liberals use their needs to justify their version of progress and legitimate their claims to "reason" and "common sense." Boyte correctly responds: "Where do ordinary people, steeped in life by experience of humiliation and self-doubt, gain the courage, the self-confidence, the mutual trust, above all the hope, to take action on their own behalf? To pose such a question is to challenge the fundamentals of political orthodoxy."

Fortunately, the question has always been asked, in the action of protest if not in the theory of social science bureaucracies. In the seventies, Boyte argues, when better known activists revolted against an "excess of democracy" or went to work for public or private agencies, grass roots battles against corporate capitalism continued in neighborhood and citizen action, in community organizations, public interest lobbies, community development corporations and self-help programs, in workplace organizing against brown and black lung disease, racial and sexual discrimination, and union-busting firms and consultants. While corporations launched a powerful counterattack on liberal assumptions, and intellectuals warned against excessive moralism and activism, thousands of Americans organized against redlining of neighborhoods, utilities rip-offs, environmental destruction, tax abatements for corporations and a thousand other of the day-to-day atrocities which mock the pretensions of democracy.

Most notable are neighborhood, "turf" organizations of the Saul Alinsky tradition, modified by experience, in dozens of communities around the country. New "majoritarian strategies" have developed in mass-based multi-issue coalitions to confront utilities, government buraeaucracies and the local branches of multi-national corporations. Nader-style public interest research and lobbying provides another expression of citizenship, attracting professionals and college students. New organization drives among public employees, service workers and minorities have expanded the membership of some dynamic unions, while grass roots insurgency among miners, textile workers, women in offices and factories, and workers in communities faced with runaway shops all manifest the continuing awareness of ordinary citizens that America's political economy does not work in their behalf. If they have grown suspicious of traditional liberal public policies and downright hostile to governmental bureaucracies, it is possible that they have good reason. It is neither treason nor neo-conservatism to suggest that the progressives badly need to rethink some of their basic assumptions and reexamine some of their policy options.

In fact, social reform through government action and popular democracy aimed at "citizen power over both public and economic activity" have always been uneasy bedfellows, from the days when intelligent realists persuaded the Populists to fuse with Bryan's Democratic party through Franklin Roosevelt's uneasy marriage of legal and economic experts with urban political machines to John Kennedy's charismatic alliance of urban ethnic and Harvard intellectuals. The Democratic party provided welfare state compensations and modest regulation of the economy, but in the process ignored and eroded local government and surrendered any aspiration to economic democracy. It could do so because the combination of economic expansion, the Cold War and the growth of public bureaucracies institutionalized the "do-gooder" values of middle class reform: power in the hands of the right people would do more for social justice and civil equality than the people could possibly do for themselves.

Even those who recognize the continuing presence of what Boyte calls "the citizen advocacy tradition" have lacked a theory to justify it and a program to mold it into a national political force.

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One reason is that such insurgency has always been grounded in what intellectuals perceive as "cultural backwaters": families, churches, ethnic groups, local voluntary associations. Political commentators have noted for a decade the economic progressivism and cultural conservatism of minorities, workers, lower middle-class ethnics. The New Right has affirmed their cultural conservatism and, in the absence of alternatives, has persuaded them to try the nostrums of supply side economics. Low voter turnouts and some liberal successes indicate that not all are fooled, but at the very least it should be clear that cultural issues cannot be ignored or belittled. Liberals like McGovern, nevertheless, continue to regard opposition to the ERA, and abortion, and support for traditional and family values as reactionary and emotional. At the same time they ignore the demand for economic democracy, for some process of corporate accountability to local communities and the public good. The specter of a state by state battle over a pro-life amendment to the constitution stands before us, threatening to institutionalize the divisions within the Democratic party and allow an alignment to the right which has not yet taken place. Harry Boyte thinks the answer is to be found in citizen action aimed at decentralization and economic democracy.

Harry Boyte is an optimist. Recognizing the limitations of citizen action to date, he nevertheless finds in the grass roots a vitality of democratic expression which promises well for the future. He reminds those fearful of the "moral majority" that the nation's largest conservative denomination, the Southern Baptist Convention, as recently as 1978, adopted a very progressive stand on matters of domestic and foreign policy. He notes the role played by Catholic churches in community organization around the country. He sees among organizers a growing sophistication and a new ability to be self-critical. Long marked by internecine conflict and turf wars, community organization networks are increasingly willing to consider cooperation and joint action, recognizing that they must build a national movement if they are to reach the structures of corporate power and cultural domination which prevent real democratization in local communities. While some scholars may find Boyte's analysis naive, there is in fact a large new literature of labor, urban and political history which confirms his argument that democratic empowerment must be grounded in local experience. The best of our contemporary social commentators understand that our nation requires a rebirth of social consciousness. Harry Boyte provides considerable evidence that around the country many people are giving life to what John Kenneth Galbraith told last year's graduating class at Berkeley was America's greatest need: "a strong revival of what anciently has been called the social ethic, what more simply is a good sense of community." For those who will look in the right place, "a good sense of community" can be found; it can even be shared. A willingness to look and to share, to decide to be with, and not only for, the people, is the indispensable requirement of progressive renewal in the 1980's.

A kinsman to so many

THOMAS MERTON, A PICTORIAL BIOGRAPHY

James Forest

Paulist Press, $5.95, 102 pp.

WORDS AND SILENCE
ON THE POETRY OF THOMAS MERTON

Therese Lentfoehr

New Directions, $4.95, 144 pp.

THE ART OF THOMAS MERTON

Ross Labrie

Texas Christian University, $8 (paper), 173 pp.

THE SOLITARY EXPLORER
THOMAS MERTON'S TRANSFORMING JOURNEY

Elena Malits

Harper and Row, $12.95, 340 pp.

MERTON, A BIOGRAPHY

Monica Furlong

Harper and Row, $12.95, 340 pp.

James T. Baker

A DECADE AGO, when I took the first tentative, frightened step toward an evaluation of the life and work of Thomas Merton, a distinguished reviewer (who will remain unidentified) gave my book and me rather sympathetic short shrift. I had worked long hard and well, he allowed, but it was a shame really: the book was published by a university press, a southern university press at that, and it was about a man who would so quickly fade from public view that his name would hardly be recognized in ten years' time.

The first point is doubtless true. The university press, especially in the South, is not the way to immortality. But how mistaken my man was about Thomas Merton's future. In these ten years thirty Merton books have appeared. At least a hundred theses and dissertations have been or are being written on his life and work. Articles on his thought number probably a thousand. Annual conferences are held all over North America to pursue Merton themes. Scholars in the field of American religion have begun to notice a significant "Merton phase" in the religious pilgrimage of many young people. No one has the slightest idea where it will all end—if indeed it ever does.

Writers of every type—students of poetry, of American Catholic religion, of social criticism, of the spiritual life—swarm over Merton's literary carcass, reconstructing the organs, sifting the cells, drawing brave conclusions and devising daring hypotheses about the nature of religious-creative man. What is most pleasantly surprising is how many of them, the five listed above included, write good-to-excellent books about this most creative of religious men.

Each new Merton book is different, as the ones above prove, written by a different kind of person on a different Merton

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subject from a different perspective for a different audience; but each one exhibits a deep affection for the man, and that affection gives each one a fine nobility. Merton seems to demand and get the very best from those who write about him. These newest of Merton books are probably the best each writer will produce. Each writer probably feels, as I once did, that Merton belongs to him or her and yet must be shared with the world. A saint? Certainly a prime candidate.

Merton continues to attract such broad and enthusiastic interest—and to inspire such devotion—because his versatility makes him a kinsman to so many kinds of people. He searches for the same elusive God, who alone can fill man's spiritual vacuum, that so many people today pursue. He is artist, poet, philosopher, theologian: a man with a hundred passions, a man with a canine appetite for leporine fantasies, a brother to all who search for truth. He symbolizes and epitomizes modern man, head in the clouds, feet in quicksand, fighting every battle up hill but with a look of confidence on his face, making all his "cheeses for Jesus." All of his work is autobiographical, as is no other American religious writer's, all of it a public examination of his every weakness, his every strength, lamenting, celebrating, yet without maudlin sentimentality or false bravado.

Which makes him a fascinating subject for each new reader, and probably for each new generation of readers, far into the future. Merton will not fade.

Of the five new Merton books, two are biographies (one pictorial, one interpretive), two are concerned with his literature, and one deals with his spiritual pilgrimage. They all follow Merton's journey (personal, artistic, spiritual) from his early years in France and Britain through his American career at Gethsemani down to his odd death in Bangkok. This they must do, of course, because this is what Merton offers every reader: a guided tour down his own wooded pathway from where it all began to wherever it all might be going.

Jim Forest, once with the *Catholic Worker*, now with the Fellowship of Reconciliation in Europe, has assembled a

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grand array of photographs to illuminate the Merton journey in his *Thomas Merton, A Pictorial Biography*. The text follows Merton's own versions of the story (as told in *The Seven Storey Mountain*) to its end and then adds a helpful if unsurprising update to cover the years from World War II to 1968. Forest's account is fully as fluent and entertaining as Ed Rice's *(A Man in the Sycamore Tree)* without Rice's lapses into fantasy and sensation. Forest's research and writing are solid, and his book fills a longstanding need for a "simple" yet complete Merton biography. Don't be surprised if this turns out to be the Merton book most read by future generations.

Sister Therese Lenfoehr, a poet herself, was perhaps Merton's most consistent poetic "pen pal" over the years. Her *Words and Silence* is a good, basic introduction to the Merton poetry, its variety, its struggle toward maturity. Though it provides fewer intimate glimpses of Merton's inner vision and its motivation than one might expect from a soul sister, it does give the kind of interpretive detail students of poetry need in order to approach a new poet. Here, as in the other books, Merton is seen searching for his own soul's identity, this time through his verse. As Therese says: "Merton's uniqueness as a religious poet lies in his focusing on the 'inner experience,' as he called it, the God-encounter in the depths of one's being and his striving to articulate it in his poetry." So apparently with all his life and work.

Ross Labrie's *The Art of Thomas Merton* is not about Merton's considerable visual art—his calligraphy, his photography—but about the art of his pen. It provides a good, clear analysis and evaluation of the four "types" of Merton writing through which he sought to find his own destiny: (1) narrative, with which he was for the most part unsuccessful, with the notable exception of *The Seven Storey Mountain;* (2) diary, in which more than any other form he was able to bare his soul to the world; 3) essay, where he was doubtless at his best; 4) and poetry, which he always considered his first but most frustrating love, his gloriously "useless" work. Labrie gives one of the most accurate assessments yet of the effect the censors had on Merton's writings, of the creative tension they contributed to his sensitive psyche. It is worth noting that Merton books are coming from all over now, this one from Texas, from the press of a Protestant university.

Though it is not a biography or strictly a study of Merton's writings, Elena Malits's *Solitary Explorer* is one of the best studies of Merton's journey. She reminds us that *The Seven Storey Mountain*, which is often taken as the definitive story of Merton's life, is less than half his story, and a censored half at that. It does provide a passionate, sometimes simplistic account of Merton's journey to the mysterious realm of religion and on to "the desert" of monastic contemplation; but in subsequent books Merton went on further journeys: to social criticism, to Eastern religions, to be himself after all the years of assumed identity. Elena's thesis, carefully and thoroughly developed in a book that might serve as a guide to any reader's spiritual quest, is that all of Merton's thought is self-study, all of his art self-portraiture, a welcome addition to the arid grazing grounds of modern theology. *The Solitary Explorer* will not be permanently crippled by an early *New York Times* review featuring three factual errors in the first paragraph.

Monica Furlong's *Merton, A Biography* deserves the attention it is receiving from reviewers and buyers. She digs deeper into Merton's multilayered life and interprets the bewildering mountains of facts more thoroughly and accurately than any previous biographer. In light of this achievement even her occasional lapses into pop psychoanalysis and her "novelist's tendency" to use question marks instead of declarative periods are forgivable. Her style is generally of such high quality that readers will read closely even the passages where the story is quite familiar.

Furlong honestly and carefully treats the two heretofore inadequately covered crises of Merton's life: the unwanted pregnancy of a Cambridge "shop girl" in the 1930s and the amateur journey into neurosis in the 1950s. In fact, the Merton story is so well and completely told here that one has to wonder if there is any need for Michael Mott's yet-to-be-written "official" biography, the *textus receptus* of the Merton Legacy Trust.

What all of the new Merton books say is that Merton had both the ego and the perception to recognize in his own experience the key to theological communication with a secular world. That he could and would cast himself in the role of modern religious man, that he would and could make theological mountains out of personal molehills, meant that he would work always in semi-darkness, as do all people who work on frontiers, and that he would continue to attract and capture the imaginations of men and women seeking their own dusky destinies. Some nerve. Some courage. Some man.

The bright, wounded generation

FAULT LINES

James Carroll

Little, Brown, $11.95, 288 pp.

Eugene Kennedy

JAMES CARROLL has written a miniature in which the lines that connect the lives of the main characters are drawn together so tautly that they almost shatter the small frame of the narrative. Having filled a vast and airy canvas with the colorful characters of *Mortal Friends,* Carroll has chosen a more restricted and more demanding background for this very Catholic exploration of our sinful condition and our varied attempts at redemption and salvation. This is a catholic novel in the richest sense of that phrase because it addresses itself to profoundly human issues, to conscience and responsibility, to the fact so many would like to ignore, that everything in our relationships with each other makes a difference, that at close quarters with each other there is no vague refuge beyond moral referent "in which nobody else is hurt." This is a book about people who, like most of us, are capable of big mistakes and who, even in pursuit of forgiveness or in the act of attempting to heal those

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Merton has taught us to appreciate the theological significance of the quest for self-identity. He reintroduced and legitimized the use of "I" in religious inquiry—not just the "I" that represents the individual ego asserting various opinions and making certain claims but also the searching, probing, receptive, loving "I" that passionately seeks to discover God in the self, in every person, in the whole of creation.

Elena Malits
The Solitary Explorer

who are hurt, sometimes make things worse instead of better.

James Carroll also treats a subject which will clearly be a main preoccupation of the generation that turns forty during this decade. After almost fifteen years of confusion and experimentation in life-styles many men and women, after the battering of a divorce and the failure of indifference as a mode of human relationship, are searching anew for values on which they can build more satisfying lives for themselves and their children. We are, for better or worse, living through a period in which people are struggling to understand the nature of human generativity and the existential consequences of being parents as well as spouses. Many are attempting to pick up their lives again and to make them whole by a return to what appear to be more conventional styles of life. Spouses want to love each other truly, they want marriage to work even after they have been through ones that haven't; they want things hooked up again into a circuit of meaning that has suddenly become urgently important once more.

Hooking things up, of course, is the business of religion and the themes of its perennial task undergird Carroll's work. His characters represent the bright, wounded generation that lost itself in the evil cloud of the Vietnam war, in the years when assassinations and upheavals of every sort gave an apocalyptic cast to modern life, in the days when, perversely enough, liberation seemed at hand.

David Dolan, former war protestor, ends his long exile in Sweden to find the country greatly changed. He wants to contact his sister-in-law Eddie, onetime accomplice in helping him escape in his brother's clothes — the brother who was to die in the Vietnam war that was David's outrage and cause. Dolan also took his brother's place in bed with Eddie before his decade-long exile in the cold darkness of the country that gave him refuge but not a home. After the death of his brother his sister-in-law had mothered his posthumous child, become a successful writer and married famous actor Cheney McCoy. The latter, who uses his art in his life as much as his life in his art, legally adopts the boy who is named Bren. As the book opens, Bren has been taken by his mother to the East Coast, her first step toward divorce from the devouring, macho McCoy. The book centers on these four characters and how the lines of their lives are finally winched together on an island off Maine with a dramatic intensity that almost overwhelms the theological issues that are the core of Carroll's and so many serious writers' concern.

All of this is managed with considerable narrative skill and counterpoint, as in the contrasts between McCoy in *Richard III* and in real life. The boy Bren seems to be the least successful of these engaging characterizations; his head contains far more careful observation and reflection on life than is likely even in the most precocious six-year-old. This does not destroy him, however, as the centerpiece of everyone's concern. He is perceived by and means something quite different for his mother, his uncle, and his stepfather, all of whom are so caught up in salvaging their pasts that they cannot see him very clearly for himself.

Carroll's story explores broken lives, wrong judgments, the cruel harshness of too easy love, and the moral pressure that invades the universe when we recognize the marks we leave on each other every day. All this is evoked, with remarkable effect, on a small stage surrounded by forces of nature, forest, and tides that threaten to move in and retake it at any moment.

The questions that arise transcend those about the individual fates of the leading characters. It is no small

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achievement to cause a reader to inspect the ragged edges of these lives to discover meanings that may not be immediately apparent, and to survey one's own for a more accurate sense of true moral courage. It is a book about the faults that are, for all of us, the crooked lines spoken of by Claudel, through which we make our way toward unlikely and unexpected redemption.

Running down the liberal centuries

ENTROPY
A NEW WORLD VIEW
Jeremy Rifkin and Ted Howard
Viking, $10.95, 324 pp.

Jack Clark

One of the earliest and most persistent responses to industrialization and its "dark, Satanic mills" has been a vision of and a desire for a more decentralized, pastoral, and egalitarian community. Marxists and business magnates who agreed on little else could find common cause in dismissing such visions. Clearly, the romantics and utopians were running against the tide of history and of progress in seeking to go backward; their vision affronted that most modern of gods, Science.

In *Entropy*, Jeremy Rifkin seeks to turn the accusation on its head. The most overwhelming scientific fact confronting us, he and Ted Howard argue, is the second law of thermodymanics, the entropy law. Order in the human environment is created only by creating a larger disorder in the universe. Inexorably we bring matter and energy from usable to unusable forms. More specifically we have spent the last three centuries squandering millions of years of solar energy stored in fossil fuels. In wasting that resource we lulled ourselves into believing that there were no limits. Now, according to Rifkin, we are sharply up against nature's limits, and our lifestyles must change radically.

Many of the changes Rifkin advocates reflect a fairly familiar liberal-left-ecologist agenda. Nuclear power, in both its fission and fusion forms, must be rejected; solar energy must be developed; military spending represents "the most highly entropic form of human activity" and must be curtailed; excess packaging needs to be cut, transportation must be more energy-efficient. In all these areas of policy discussion, Rifkin covers familiar ground, but his presentation is well-organized and contains very useful information in condensed form (e.g. it takes 10 calories of energy for American farms to produce one calorie of food).

Since *Entropy* is presented as nothing less than a new world view, Rifkin goes well beyond the familiar agenda in proposing lifestyle changes. Our cities are too big, requiring too many people in service occupations; our agriculture too energy intensive. Education consists too much of cramming facts in people's heads and too little in teaching people to think in qualitative terms. Even religion must be reformulated, or, in Rifkin's phrase, we must have a "second Christian Reformation."

On the other side of all these changes lies a society very much like the one proposed by the romantics and utopians. We will live, according to Rifkin's scheme, mostly as subsistence farmers, with some people engaged in manufacturing far fewer goods than are made now. Cities will be much smaller, perhaps 50,000 or so at the maximum. The Biblical injunction to have dominion over the earth will be reinterpreted to mean humans exercising a careful stewardship over the finite resources of God's creation.

Most of all, the future society will have internalized the entropic world view, and people will understand that Progress and History are illusions based on an outmoded Newtonian world view. Throughout the book, Rifkin treats the thought of the last three centuries as a nightmare from which humankind must awake. John Locke's work is described chiefly as "an environmentalist's nightmare." (One is tempted to note how curious this is from a writer who was popularizing the revolutionary traditions of the American Revolution four short years ago.) According to Rifkin all social thought since Newton and Descartes has been a harmful illusion. Those who cling to these illusions are resisting the most modern mandates of science.

Interestingly, Rifkin at one point suggests that resistance to the new entropic realities may take a fascist form. What does not seem to occur to him is that precisely the social order he envisions may be highly authoritarian. Whatever illusions and naiveté liberals and radicals may have carried from the Enlightenment onward, the idea of historical progress and of human beings as the center of the universe provided intellectual tools for opposing tyranny and establishing democratic rule. In discarding his liberal credentials Rifkin shows no understanding of that accomplishment.

Although one wants to praise a writer for an effort to go beyond analysis and imagine solutions, Rifkin's forgetfulness of liberal history undermines the seriousness of *Entropy*. Almost inevitably, in a book which attempts to cover so much material other minor flaws abound. Often the tone combines a glib self-assurance with painfully evident mistakes (to cite two examples: the assertion that other-worldliness led to Christianity's tolerance for despoiling the environment and the assertion that a one-to-

REVIEWERS

DAVID J. O'BRIEN *teaches history at the College of the Holy Cross, Worcester.*

JAMES T. BAKER *is the author of the first published book on Thomas Merton,* Thomas Merton: Social Critic.

EUGENE KENNEDY *is the author of the* Father's Day *(Doubleday).*

JACK CLARK *is publisher of* Food Monitor, *a bi-monthly journal of World Hunger Year, Inc. (WHY).*

JEAN BETHKE ELSHTAIN *is an associate professor of political science at The University of Massachusetts, Amherst.*

JOHN DEEDY *is the author of the newly published "interim biography" of Daniel Berrigan,* Apologies, Dear Friends *(Fides/Claretian).*

WILLIAM H. SLAVICK *is a member of the faculty at the University of Southern Maine.*

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one relationship exists between unemployment and entropy). Major arguments could begin around Rifkin's romanticization of subsistence, organic farming as a way of life for most of humanity. All of that matters much less than *Entropy's* utter dismissal of the liberal tradition and total rejection of nearly three centuries of social and political thought. Human liberty represents a precious and very fragile conquest. Imagining any future without appreciating that fact becomes a sterile and unworthy exercise.

Passion, compassion, & public leadership

PATRICIDE IN THE HOUSE DIVIDED
A PSYCHOLOGICAL INTERPRETATION OF LINCOLN AND HIS AGE

George B. Forgie

W. W. Norton, $14.95, 308 pp.

Jean Bethke Elshtain

THIS is a wonderfully conceived and executed book. It is, in fact, exhilarating to read and few books, particularly in the academic disciplines, are exhilarating these days. Forgie illumines in some new and startling ways an epoch familiar, in broad outline, to us all: the America of the pre-Civil War generation. One might have thought that nearly all there is to say had been said on the 'house divided,' slavery, Douglas and Lincoln. What Forgie manages to do is to re-think the rich materials of this period, to look at American social life, political education, national mythology, and domestically through an angle of vision afforded by the deft and subtle use of psychoanalytic concepts and insights. Psycho-history remains a controversial undertaking. In the hands of a scholar as meticulous and clever as Forgie one can see the promises of the *genre* realized. (The pitfalls are abundant enough: one need only glance at a recent psychobiography of President Carter for an instance of just how tendentious the approach can be in the hands of less interesting thinkers.)

What I shall attempt, in this review, is to give my sense of Forgie's complex work. Forgie's key terms are *sentiment* and *post-heroic*. I shall concentrate on sentiment.

By sentiment Forgie means that the conventions of American public language between the 1790s and the Civil War were very much couched in familial and domestic terms—in terms of sentiment—and the union was conceived as one great household. Categories of private, domestic life were superimposed, as it were, upon the public realm "in order to encourage the transference of emotion" to objects that were necessarily abstract and distinct. This sentimental public language, in turn, was the seed-bed of political education. The virtue and character of the citizenry was an impassioned concern of the epoch. Concerted attempts were made to "present the political and historical world to the child in understandable terms that would serve to bind him to it and to inculcate principles of virtue. It was with these purposes in mind that people began to compare the amorphous and invisible Union to a family or house. To do so was to give the Union an image and a shape at once, thereby making it both more comprehensible and a magnet for that displaced emotion I called sentiment," Forgie observes.

Through the process of extending natural, private affections to the public realm *via* the use of familial metaphors in public discourse, Americans were joined to one another through increasingly deep and strong emotional bonds that were the basis for, and a vital feature of, the incoporation of certain values ("purest and best feelings") into America's collective nature. Forgie writes: ". . . metaphors that ascribed human traits to the Republic through the medium of historical actors created a link between broad political and social developments and the psychology of the self. They described a common field on which the emotional conflicts individuals experience privately, at different times, and unconsciously, could be made public, made common by simultaneous repetition, and acted out, without necessarily becoming conscious in the process."

This is the world—one in which a 'house divided against itself cannot stand'—in which Lincoln took the public stage. It was a volatile epoch, volatile not simply or only because of economic and social forces at work but because the very domestic imagery that pervaded public discourse contained within it a potentially primitive primal element: it both tied people together but contained the potential to split them apart. One might call this the existential wager of the binding process Forgie so fascinatingly unfolds.

As events worsened, the public, sentimental language of the day allowed increasingly for the reemergence of modes of mental functioning characteristic of psychic activity during early developmental periods. The explicit aim was to restore virtuous, individual citizenship and faith in the Union. This could be done, so the argument would have gone if explicitly articulated, only by restoring individuals to private virtue, recalling

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The American bishops' committee on the parish has just published a booklet which formulates a vision of what parishes could be for their people. Copies of *The Parish: A People, A Mission, A Structure* may be obtained at no cost by writing the USCC Publications Office, 1312 Massachusetts Avenue, Washington, D.C. 20005.

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Kirkridge Gathering

The Company at Kirkridge gathering May 8, 9, 10, 1981 will be held at Kirkridge, Bangor, Pa. Francis V. Tiso, M. Div., Eastern Religion editor of Seabury Press will present "A World Of Grace: Learning From Spirituality East and West." For more information write Anthony Ciccariello, 520 W. Gray St., Elmira, N.Y. 14905.

domestic categories, and seeking to awaken and transfer feelings towards the father (Washington) and toward all the brothers and sisters in the family to the public arena. Ironically, as Forgie points out, such regression, given the social circumstances, had the result of encouraging aggression and making it not only possible but more likely by providing vivid images of domesticated-public violence: in a word, *fratricide*. "In warning against violence . . . the sentimentalists did not realize that they were playing into the hands of the deepest fantasies of the people they sought to calm." For regression to a childhood condition holds out, among other things, the promise of, or encourages the possibilities for, eliminating one's rivals. Children revel in fantasies of violence and to return to childhood is to call these back up again *if* the return is done through the medium of an almost purely domestic set of metaphors, symbols and images—if one never 'leaves home.'

The melodrama of the house divided was Lincoln's obsession and preoccupation. His own initial version, made possible by the conventions of public discourse of his day and his own political education into reverence for 'the fathers,' was for all the good brothers to band together, direct their angry passions upon the scapegoat brother, and throw him from power or prevent him from gaining greater power. (Forgie details how Stephen A. Douglas came to play the hapless role in this psycho-political drama.) Events from 1854 on enabled Lincoln to tap and use both his filiopiety and his great ambition (in tension with one another) to attain a higher synthesis, a vision of compassion and tenderness. Rising above his own fratricidal impulses, Lincoln encourage his generation to keep the house intact and to *extend it* to include the previously excluded (unhoused) by working out a public fantasy of the house besieged. Slavery became the monster whose presence in the house or whose coming into other parts of the house would lead it to fall. "Like Harriet Beecher Stowe, Lincoln used domestic imagery to bring complex political issues to people in their own ancient and daily language, thereby enabling and finally compelling them to feel the slavery problem as their problem. This was Lincoln's great passion and his extraordinary accomplishment.

By rising above the regressive fantasy of his day—brothers fighting each other over patrimony—which Forgie implies that Lincoln sensed was as attractive as it was horrible and thus truly dangerous, Lincoln "reimagined the danger so as to divest it of all possible appeal. He invoked the deeper, primordial fear of the monster trying to get into the house." Thus the confrontation Lincoln set up was not a fratricidal one between North and South but one between good and evil which did not correspond crudely to the division of brothers along sectional lines. The conventions of public discourse, the process of political education through which he had himself passed and which he could presume as commonly shared, were the template upon which Lincoln moved to enable his country men and women to transcend the dangers inherent *within* that tradition by evoking a set of images also internal to it to fight the regressive possibilities. Forgie suggests, and I will submit, that it is a tale of great heroism.

I should add that there are points of interpretation about which historians and political thinkers will differ and debate and there is, to my mind, one serious omission in Forgie's study, namely, a treatment of the many radical, communitarian, and utopian movements of the period Forgie finds dominated by a conservative domesticity and a cult of sentiment. It is a tribute to the skill with which Forgie has executed his own argument that these qualms fade alongside his accomplishment.

In Brief

AN AMERICAN SAGA: THE LIFE AND TIMES OF ROCKWELL KENT, *by David Traxel, Harper & Row, $15.95, 248 pp.*

Rockwell Kent (1882-1971) was one of the important artists of his times and a supreme controversialist. He was also very much a paradox. He was consumed with concern for humankind, but he

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could be unbelievably inconsiderate, even cruel to people close to him—wives and lovers, for instance, whom he would leave at the drop of an oar for a distant shore, or a more inviting bed. He was an unblushing admirer of socialism and the Soviet Republic, but he was more than willing to play the capitalist game, on one occasion investing a $30,000 legacy and turning a handsome triple profit. He was preoccupied with the state of American art, but when it came time to dispose of the enormous body of his own work—more than 80 paintings and 800 drawings and prints—these he donated to the Russian people.

David Traxel gets down all the facts on Kent—the Joe McCarthy confrontation; the passport case that went to the Supreme Court—yet gives few insights into this fascinating figure who was a counterpart Gauguin of sorts, though in geographical reverse. Kent was forever running off to some desolate corner of the world—Greenland, Alaska, Tierra del Fuego—to sketch, to paint, to commune with the nature of cold, unforgiving climes.

Traxel is admiring of Kent. But he is protective, and therefore undiscovering. He doesn't get inside the man. The best books on Kent thus remain his autobiographies, *This Is My Own* and *It's Me O Lord.*

JOHN DEEDY

PASSAGE THROUGH GEHENNA, *by Madison Jones, Louisiana State University, $8.95, 270 pp.*

Among other virtues, Flannery O'Connor's published correspondence demonstrates a wholesome directness: "*The Commonweal* has a lousy review of *The Innocents* by Madison Jones. It is a very fine book." Miss O'Connor's epistolary interest in the fate of Jones's novels became a minor theme. The last, in a characteristic O'Connor hyperbole: "It's a shame about his books. They are excellent and fall like lead clear out of sight the moment they are published." (She was not there to appreciate the praise *A Cry of Absence* received in 1971.)

Passage Through Gehenna will not be mistaken for O'Connor's. Jones lacks her ear for Southern speech, her eye for manners, and the clarity of perspective informed by a certain faith. But once he gets beyond a clumsy and unnecessary identification of the narrator, Jones affords an unparalleled vision of the Southern world of Protestant salvation by faith, one probably impossible before O'Connor's fiction.

When Jud, who has felt the hand of the faith healer, Salter, and would become a preacher, moves from the simplicity of the farm to Hallboro, he immediately recognizes its secular "air of godlessness." People do things "without punishment or any pains of conscience." They "believed terrible things." He works in the hardware store kept by the dourly religious and crippled Luther Nunn and his wife, Lily, and soon lodges with them. When Jud feels the sexual spell Lily casts, observes her "rounded breasts" and the pitted skin of her cheeks "as if small worms had gnawed at them," and hears her mock everything he believes, we sense that it is, in truth, Helltown Jud has entered. The now distant Salter calls him to prayer: "Ain't the Lord's promise enough for you, boy?" In Lily's world, "There was no God, no devil." Soon, Jud's "prayers were futile, silenced by his blood."

Jud is torn between conscience and Lily's appeal to "life." A shadowy and sinister schoolmate, Charles Meagher, whom he fears, and the festering Lily, who is bent upon winning him completely before cuckholding Luther—Salter calls her a witch—are his adversaries. Lily drives him to a prostitute, whom he uses to prove Lily's contention that even Salter is not pure. Then she sets Jud about seducing the town "angel of mercy," Hannah Rice, who proposes love as an answer to mortality and loneliness.

Hannah reminds Jud that he "can't just look at how it is in the world." In the hidden "still place" of the Rices' Edenic garden he finds something of the peace he knew "up home." Hannah reminds him that he must ask for the freedom Christ offers. Her preacher father sees "God's grace on it" when the sunset illuminates Hannah's hair. But a long drought and the barking of a dog as accompaniment to Jud's evil moves indicate that the garden is not Hannah's private domain.

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With Jud's choice of Lily's darkness, "Lonesomeness closed in like pain around his heart." He finds himself in a lightless depth: "If he should die and go to hell he knew it would be like that—a kind of starving that never starves, and endless hopeless and desperate craving of all his bodily senses." Salter knows: "Open up your eyes, boy; it ain't no place to hide."

Jud extends the long tradition from Augustine through Graham Greene to O'Connor's Hazel Motes. What Madison Jones contributes is a perspective less interested than O'Connor's in the "grimly comic," the "ridiculous," and the strange workings of grace and more attuned to the implications in life of the sharp line Southern Baptists draw between the world which is Satan's—Lily and Meagher—and the faith life the sacrificial Salter and Hannah represent. Jud's crossings on the road to redemption chart the respective territories, even though his well-being in the end, after atonement in jail for his various wrongs, appears less a matter of faith than morals.

WILLIAM H. SLAVICK

Correspondence

(Continued from page 194)

for this very reason. I could not understand nor could I abide your lack of support for this man.

If enough of the reputable publications in the country had had sufficient foresight, and sufficient courage to buck the overwhelmingly unfavorable tide of the national press, to stand up for Carter, perhaps we might have been spared four years of Reagan, Stockman, and Haig. It was to be expected from the likes of *Time* and *Newsweek*, but not so of *Commonweal*, nor for that matter of publications like the *Atlantic* and *Harper*'s. Even some of the major newspapers that gave him half-hearted or last-minute support did so only after carefully building an anti-Carter image during most of his administration. The national press bears a major share of responsibility for the replacement of a man of Carter's abilities with Ronald Reagan; this is no small matter for the editors of this country to ponder. . . .

BLANCHE JANTZEN

Commonweal welcomes letters on subjects treated in its pages. Letters of not more than 250 or 300 words naturally have a better chance of being published.

No medical model

Arlington, Tex.

To the Editors: I trust that readers understood that it was not the concept of providing meaningful programs for prisoners that I was criticizing in R.J. Stout's article "Going Straight" [Jan. 16], but rather the misuse of the term "rehabilitation." This misuse, expecially in the context of a "medical model" which is outmoded and inappropriate in prison settings, has largely contributed to the real or alleged failure of such programs.

While I can take no credit, I am pleased that many professionals have substituted the terms "resocialization" or "reintegration." Whether the use of more accurate terminology will actually translate into more realistic program efforts remains a question, of course, especially given the lay public's current mood.

I agree with what seems to be one of Mr. Stout's basic contentions: one cannot usually learn to behave in a "normal" manner while existing in the basically abnormal environment that characterizes most of our penal institutions.

MARY G. ALMORE
Criminal Justice Programs
The University of
Texas at Arlington

The Hostage example

New York, N.Y.

To the Editors: Robert Joe Stout's essay, "Going Straight" [Jan. 16], was on target. We perpetuate crime by ignoring the humanity of the people we incarcerate. By placing people into a non-decision-making environment, we allow them to nurture all the aspects which resulted in their incarceration.

Nothing dramatized this more than the return of the hostages. Government officials made it clear that they understood that the separation from the mainstream would cause great difficulty for many of the remaining hostages. Irrespective of why someone is isolated, the results have an effect on the society to which the prisoner is returning.

It must also be noted that American prisoners traditionally have disadvantages not confronted by the hostages:

1. A majority of prisoners in America were unemployed when arrested and have little vision of legitimate employment.

2. Many prisoners have little or no family support to which they return.

3. A majority of prisoners have an addiction problem, drugs or alcohol, which has not been dealt with while incarcerated.

4. Nearly half of the men in our adult and juvenile institutions have a reading level so low that they are virtually unemployable.

5. There is an inability to make decisions and personal choices after being incarcerated when all decisions and choices are made for the individual.

6. Violence is part of the prison subculture in the U.S.A. and many prisoners are affected even if they had no violence in their civilian past. No one deals with the acquired violence as prisoners are released back into the community.

DAVID ROTHENBERG
Executive Director
The Fortune Society

Crossroad mix-up

New York

To the Editors: In your Jan. 20 review of *A World of Grace: An Introduction to the Themes and Foundations of Karl Rahner,* edited by Leo O'Donovan, and of *A New Christology,* by Karl Rahner and Wilhelm Thusing, these books were cited as being published by the Seabury Press. A similiar statement appeared in the recent religious book round-up [Feb. 27] with Rahner's *The Foundations of Christian Faith,* Hans Küng's *The Church Maintained in Truth,* and Edward Schillebeeckx's *Christ: The Experience of Jesus as Lord.*

The publisher of all these titles, originally Seabury, is now The Crossroad

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Publishing Company (18 East 41st St., New York, N.Y. 10017). Established last year by Werner Mark Linz, Justus George Lawler, and Richard Payne, The Crossroad Publishing Company continues the international, ecumenical publishing programs originated under the Herder & Herder imprint and then carried on at the Seabury Press. The Crossroad program will continue to include books by Gregory Baum, J. Dominic Crossan, Ernesto Cardenal, Jacques Ellul, Elizabeth Fiorenza, Frederick Franck, Paulo Freire, Langdon Gilkey, Bernard Häring, Ray Hart, Morton Kelsey, Eugene Kennedy, Hans Küng, Martin E. Marty, John L. McKenzie, Enda McDonagh, John Macquarrie, Johnann B. Metz, Leo O'Donovan, Karl Rahner, John A.T. Robinson, John Sanford, Roger Schutz, Edward Schillebeeckx, and David Tracy.

FRANKLIN DENNIS
The Crossroad Publishing Company

Church/worldwatch

(Continued from page 199)

phasizing the international dimensions of the El Salvador case to the detriment of focusing upon the internal injustices afflicting its population, we will misdefine the problem we face.

On policy grounds alone, the USCC believes that the long-term interest of the United States in Central America will hardly be served if the majority of the people there believe we have chosen to subordinate their quest for justice to a geopolitical policy of hemispheric security which is one step removed from their daily lives. One can be rightfully concerned to work out stable patterns of superpower behavior, but not at the price of rendering an entire population simply an instrument in a larger strategy.

One of the most useful contributions we can make to the public debate is to interpret the views of our brother bishops in Latin America. They resist and reject, as we do in this testimony, any form of Soviet encroachment in Latin America. But they also consistently affirm that the primary threat to human dignity, peace, and justice in their countries is rooted in the social system which condemns the majority of the population to a marginal existence. The bishops know there is risk in change, but they are convinced the greater risk is not to change, for that condemns another generation to poverty and misery. The policy of the United States, in its political, economic, and military aspects, has historically been the most influential outside force touching Latin America. The spirit of the moment there, in the church and in the wider society, is to overcome past patterns of dominance. But even in this quest for authentic liberation, perceptive observers know that interdependence of some type with the United States will be a fact of life.

If U.S. policy sees the risk of change in Latin America as so threatening that it appears to support almost any sitting government which flaunts its anti-Communist credentials, we place ourselves against the best insights of the church in Latin America. In El Salvador and throughout the continent conditions cry out for nothing less than the "profound and courageous reforms" demanded by John Paul II during his visit in Brazil. The first recommendation of this testimony, reflecting the pope's recent statement in Manila, is that the United States should not place itself on the side of those who say "security" requires postponement of justice and suppression of human rights.

Our second recommendation is to repeat here the call of Bishop Rivera y Damas for both of the major powers to stop their intervention, particularly the sale and supply of armaments, in an already violent conflict. The USCC wishes to reaffirm here its basic policy position against any U.S. military assistance to El Salvador. We recognize that the threat to the integrity of El Salvador comes also from other powers, and we have no doubt of the need to halt the supply of arms from such sources. But it is our conviction that this would best be accomplished by some regionally or internationally agreed-upon strategy.

Our third recommendation is to encourage support by the United States for beginning a process of political dialogue within El Salvador which could at least stop the killing, and prepare for the negotiations needed to reconcile and rebuild the nation.

Our fourth recommendation is an extension of our opposition to military assistance. We speak against a policy of ever more lethal and mechanized instruments of warfare which are usually included today in counter-insurgency programs. We are against *all* military aid, but especially those instruments of massive firepower which are readily available in the U.S. arsenal and undoubtedly will be requested by the junta.

As pastors, we wish to warn, with the utmost urgency, that a grave prospect lies ahead if U.S. military assistance and advisers are substantially increased. We know how deeply and pervasively the church in El Salvador is involved with the poorest of the poor, how committed it is to the desire of the poor for change. It is the poor who have borne the brunt of the violence thus far in El Salvador, and there is no reason to believe this will change if the tempo of the war escalates. There is a very high possibility, therefore, that American military equipment will be used against whole communities of Christians, and very likely against officially designated church personnel. The murder of the four American missionaries catalyzed an outpouring of revulsion in the church in our country. This will undoubtedly be repeated if the prospect we portray here comes to pass. Before U.S. policy moves toward more aid and advisers, this truly tragic possibility ought to be clearly faced.

Our fifth recommendation is to request that U.S. efforts be directed toward the humanitarian relief and reconstruction program which El Salvador so desperately needs. In the present context of widespread conflict, the good offices of the International Committee of the Red Cross should be utilized. Mr. Chairman, we offered this testimony today knowing it stands at variance with the mood of the moment. But the moment is a critical one; the path the United States follows will be decisive for our country and for the people of El Salvador. In the name of both we respectfully but urgently ask for reconsideration of our present course.

J. BRYAN HEHIR

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